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THROUGH THE YEAR WITH BIRDS AND POETS

SARAH WILLIAMS



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Through the Year with Birds and Poets

COMPILED BY
SARAH WILLIAMS

WITH INTRODUCTION BY
BRADFORD TORREY

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER M. HARDY

Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings
"THANATOPSIS"—*William Cullen Bryant*

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS

1900
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THROUGH THE YEAR WITH BIRDS AND POETS

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Backwell and Churchill Press
BOSTON, U.S.A.

PREFACE

THIS anthology is the result of a desire on my part to collect poems and parts of poems relating to the bird life of our country. It seemed, therefore, consistent with that desire to select the writings of American and Canadian authors only, although by so doing much that is beautiful is necessarily omitted.

Twelve divisions have been made, corresponding to the months of the year, and the selections relating to each bird have been placed in the month with which that bird is usually associated.

It has seemed best to have all the selections on one subject together, although by so doing an apparent difference of opinion in some poems seems to exist concerning the association of birds with special months. This difference is easily understood when we realize that the poems have been written in many different parts of the country.

I wish to express my appreciation of the kind interest shown in this work by many friends, and am especially grateful for the privileges freely given by the Harvard University Library and the Cambridge Public Library in the use of books.

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SARAH WILLIAMS.

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INTRODUCTION

BIRDS will always be favorite subjects for poets. Color, song, flight, pleasing manners, constancy, self-sacrificing courage — such qualities as these are enough, surely, to make their possessors loved by all who worship truth and beauty. As for our American birds, so recently discovered, so new as yet to the world's knowledge, they will be more worthily sung, no doubt, as acquaintance with them becomes more general. The poet naturally, almost necessarily, chooses a theme familiar not only to himself but to his readers. So English poets write of nightingales and skylarks, robins and cuckoos — of those birds, that is to say, concerning which the English people may be supposed to know something. The rest are fair subjects for prose.

Having this aspect of the case in mind, I have been surprised to see more than fifty kinds of American birds celebrated in Miss Williams's welcome anthology; celebrated, I mean, in such a way that their specific identity is not left in doubt, as is the case, for example, when the "nuthatch," the "swallow," and the "thrush" are mentioned. Relatively this number is not large, of course, — fifty out of seven hundred and fifty, or one in fifteen, — but even so, it includes many with which the reading community in general has little or no acquaintance.

For it is true, I suppose, that not one American in fifty knows fifty kinds of American birds by sight, or in any other way.

Some of the very likeliest candidates for poetical honors — beauty, song, and habit being regarded — are almost ruled out of the account by the fact that none but students of ornithology ever see or hear them. Where could be found, or desired, a prettier subject for a poem than our black-throated green warbler, living in pine trees and singing like the drowsy voice of the tree itself; and withal, common, widely distributed, and brightly and strikingly dressed? Yet there rises at once the objection that, even in this day of outdoor study, not one American in five hundred has ever heard of the black-throated green warbler. Perhaps it remains for Doctor Van Dyke, who has made famous the Maryland yellow-throat (a much less likely subject, with quite as unversifiable a name) to do a similar service for this voice of the white pine. So may it turn out!

The poets' favorites, thus far, seem to have been the bluebird, the robin, the bobolink, the oriole, and (though one would hardly have expected it) the song-sparrow. Among the thrushes the hermit has lorded it over the rest by the accident of a happy name. The wood thrush has fared badly in comparison, though, to say the least, he is very little inferior to the hermit as a musician, and in all the eastern part of the country, at any rate, is heard by several times as many people as ever hear the hermit. Probably half the poets who write of the latter bird have actually been listening to the wood thrush, and take the other name out of ignorance,

or because it is better suited to poetic use. It would not be very surprising if this were true of Whitman, with his "gray-brown bird,"

"the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself,"

in his famous threnody, "When Lilacs last in the Door-yard Bloom'd."

The ornithological reader of this collection will notice some striking omissions. The early birds, prophets of a new summer, will always have a peculiar place in the hearts of the people; naturally they will be oftenest written about. No fault is to be found on that score — let the bluebird and the robin be welcomed every year with new verses; but how does it happen that there is no song to the scarlet tanager, brightest of all American birds, bright enough to set the woods on fire, as Emerson or Thoreau said? Are all our poets so lifted above mere matters of dress as never to have thought the tanager's splendor worthy of a lyric? And the rose-breasted grosbeak, equally handsome, a bird large enough to be seen, and familiar enough to be seen and heard from verandas and house windows, glorious for color and with a voice almost incomparable for sweetness, — why should our Puritanical verse-makers lavish so much praise upon the modest sparrow and leave the gorgeous rosebreast without a line?

The redstart, also, so gay of feather, so quick of motion, such a beauty of beauties, and with so pretty sounding a name, though it means nothing but red tail; and the Southern water thrush, lover of running brooks

and singer of glad melodies ; and the white-throated sparrow, with his breezy triplets, a voice to be noticed anywhere, and trebly welcome on desolate mountain-tops, — why should these and many more have no place in an anthology of American birds? Let the poets answer if they can. Better still, let them make good the deficiency, so that Miss Williams, in later editions of her book, may find these random introductory reflections of mine even more superfluous than they are at present.

And now, because I remark one omission which seems to be the compiler's own, let me conclude by quoting from the man who, writing in prose, has perhaps done more than any one else for the poetic appreciation of American birds, — from Henry D. Thoreau, that is to say, — a stanza about one of the most characteristic of them all :

“ Upon the lofty elm-tree sprays
The vireo rings the changes sweet,
During the trivial summer days,
Striving to lift our thoughts above the street.”

It is only a fragment, and in itself may be of no great value, but it is Thoreau's, and as such should be printed somewhere between the covers of this book.

BRADFORD TORREY.

*The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,
The street musicians of the heavenly city,
The birds, who make sweet music for us all
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.*

The Birds of Killingworth. — HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

Summer and Autumn, Winter, Spring,
Each season of the varied year,
Doth each for us a lesson bring,
If we but turn the listening ear.

Nature Intelligible. — JONES VERY.

BIRDS

*Darlings of children and of bard,
Perfect kinds by vice unmarred,
All of worth and beauty set
Gems in Nature's cabinet :
These the fables she esteems
Reality most like to dreams.
Welcome back, you little nations,
Far-travelled in the South plantations ;
Bring your music and rhythmic flight,
Your colors for our eye's delight :
Freely nestle in our roof,
Weave your chamber weather-proof ;
And your enchanting manners bring
And your autumnal gathering.
Exchange in conclave general
Greetings kind to each and all,
Conscious each of duty done
And unstained as the sun.*

Nature. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

SPRING

*A few lonely birds,
Of those that in this northern clime remain
Throughout the year, and in the dawn of spring,
At pleasant noon, from their unknown retreat
Come suddenly to view with lively notes ;
Or those that soonest to this clime return
From warmer regions, in thick groves were seen,
But with their feathers ruffled, and despoiled
Of all their glossy lustre, sitting mute,
Or only skipping, with a single chirp,
In quest of food.*

The Age of Benevolence. — CARLOS WILCOX.

*I heard the woodpecker pecking,
The bluebird tenderly sing ;
I turned and looked out of the window,
And lo, it was spring !*

.
*I forget my old age and grow youthful,
Bathing in wind-tides of spring,
When I hear the woodpecker pecking,
The first bluebird sing.*

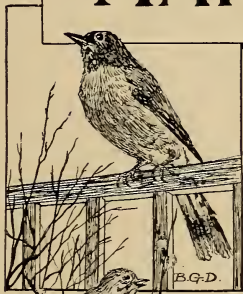
At the Window. — MAURICE THOMPSON.

*From spot to spot
The merry carol of the bluebird sounds,
The gay-wing'd messenger, the spring sends out
To tell us of her coming.*

The First Violet. — ALFRED BILLINGS STREET.



MARCH.



MARCH

*Hark ! 'Tis the bluebird's venturous strain
High on the old fringed elm at the gate :
Sweet-voiced, valiant on the swaying bough,
Alert, elate,
Dodging the fitful spits of snow,
New England's poet-laureate
Telling us that Spring has come again !*

Spring in New England. — THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

*March ! march ! march ! They are coming
In troops to the tune of the wind :
Red-headed woodpeckers drumming,
Gold-crested thrushes behind,
Sparrows in brown jackets hopping
Past every gateway and door ;
Finches with crimson caps stopping
Just where they stopped years before.*

March. — LUCY LARCOM.

*Hark ! that sweet carol ! with delight
We leave the stifling room !
The little bluebird greets our sight,
Spring, glorious Spring has come !
The south wind's kiss is on the air,
The melting snow-wreaths everywhere
Are leaping off in showers ;
And Nature, in her brightening looks,
Tells that her flowers, and leaves, and brooks,
And birds will soon be ours.*

An American Spring. — ALFRED BILLINGS STREET.

THROUGH THE YEAR WITH BIRDS AND POETS

THE HERALDS OF EARLY SPRING

My ear is listening for the sound
Of earliest bird upon the tree,
Or sparrow flitting o'er the ground,
Whose note so welcome is to me.

How long the trees have silent stood
Through the cold, cheerless winter days!
How lone the fields, the turnpike's road,
While hushed so long the sparrow's lays!

They tell of spring's returning reign,
With its warm sun and milder sky;
That every stream has burst its chain,
And the green grass and flowers are nigh.

When man with nature, too, awakes,
And feels with it the quickening breath,
And of the general joy partakes
Of earth's return from sleep and death.

Come quickly then, with welcome song,
Ye heralds of the early spring;
Why tarry on your way so long,
Nor haste your joyful notes to sing?

JONES VERY.

BIRDS IN SPRING

Listen ! What a sudden rustle

Fills the air !

All the birds are in a bustle

Everywhere.

Such a ceaseless croon and twitter

Overhead !

Such a flash of wings that glitter

Wide outspread !

Far away I hear a drumming, —

Tap, tap, tap !

Can the woodpecker be coming

After sap ?

.

What does all this haste and hurry

Mean, I pray —

All this out-door flush and flurry

Seen to-day ?

This presaging stir and humming,

Thrill and call ?

Mean ? It means that spring is coming ;

That is all !

MARGARET J. PRESTON.

AN EARLY BLUEBIRD

Leap to the highest height of spring,
And trill thy sweetest note,
Bird of the heavenly plumes and twinkling wing
And silver-toned throat !

Sing, while the maple's deepest root
Thrills with a pulse of fire
That lights its buds. Blow, blow thy tender flute,
Thy reed of rich desire !

Breathe in thy syrinx Freedom's breath,
Quaver the fresh and true,
Dispel this lingering wintry mist of death
And charm the world anew !

Thou first sky-dipped spring-bud of song
Whose heavenly ecstasy
Foretells the May while yet March winds are strong,
Fresh faith appears with thee !

How sweet, how magically rich,
Through filmy splendor blown,
Thy hopeful voice set to the promise-pitch
Of melody yet unknown !

O land of mine (where hope can grow
And send a deeper root
With every spring), hear, heed the free bird blow
Hope's charmed flute !

THROUGH THE YEAR

Ah ! who will hear, and who will care,
And who will heed thy song,
As prophecy, as hope, as promise rare,
Budding to bloom ere long?

From swelling bulbs and sprouting seed,
Sweet sap and fragrant dew,
And human hearts, grown doubly warm at need,
Leaps answer strong and true.

We see, we hear (thou liberty-loving thing,
That down spring winds doth float),
The promise of thine empyrean wing,
The hope that floods thy throat !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE BLUEBIRD

When God had made a host of them,
One little flower still lacked a stem
To hold its blossom blue ;
So into it He breathed a song,
And suddenly, with petals strong
As wings, away it flew.

JOHN B. TABB.

BLUEBIRD'S GREETING

Over the mossy walls,
Above the slumbering fields,
Where yet the ground no fruitage yields,
Save as the sunlight falls
In dreams of harvest-yellow,
What voice remembered calls,—
So bubbling fresh, so soft and mellow?

A darting, azure-feathered arrow
From some lithe sapling's bow-curve, fleet
The bluebird, springing light and narrow,
Sings in flight, with gurglings sweet :

“ Out of the South I wing,
Blown on the breath of Spring ;
The little faltering song
That in my beak I bring
Some maiden shall catch and sing,
Filling it with the longing
And the blithe, unfettered thronging
Of her spirit's blossoming.

“ Warbling along
In the sunny weather
Float my notes,
Through the sunny notes,
Falling light as a feather !
Flit, flit, o'er the fertile land

'Mid hovering insects' hums ;
Fall into the sower's hand :
Then, when his harvest comes,
The seed and the song shall have flowered together.

“ From the Coosa and Altamaha,
With the thought of the dim blue Gulf ;
From the Roanoke and Kanawha ;
From the musical Southern rivers,
O'er the land where the fierce war-wolf
Lies slain and buried in flowers ;
I come to your chill, sad hours
And the woods where the sunlight shivers.
I come like an echo : ‘ Awake ! ’
I answer the sky and the lake
And the clear, cool color that quivers
In all your azure rills.
I come to your wan, bleak hills
For a greeting that rises dearer,
To homely hearts draws me nearer
Than the warmth of the rice-fields or wealth of the
ranches.

“ I will charm away your sorrow,
For I sing of the dewy morrow :
My melody sways like the branches
My light feet set astir :
I bring to the old, as I hover,
The days and the joys that were,

And hope to the waiting lover !
Then, take my note and sing,
Filling it with the longing
And the blithe, unfettered thronging
Of your spirit's blossoming ! ”

Not long that music lingers :
Like the breath of forgotten singers
It flies, — or like the March-cloud's shadow
That sweeps with its wing the faded meadow
Not long ! And yet thy fleeting,
Thy tender, flute-tuned greeting,
O bluebird, wakes an answer that remains
The purest chord in all the year's refrains.

GEORGE P. LATHROP.

THE BLUEBIRD

When ice is thawed and snow is gone,
And racy sweetness floods the trees ;
When snow-birds from the hedge have flown,
And on the hive-porch swarm the bees,—
Drifting down the first warm wind
That thrills the earliest days of spring,
The bluebird seeks our maple groves,
And charms them into tasseling.

He sits among the delicate sprays,
With mists of splendor round him drawn,
And through the spring's prophetic veil
Sees summer's rich fulfilment dawn :

He sings, and his is nature's voice, —
A gush of melody sincere
From that great fount of harmony
Which thaws and runs when spring is here.

Short is his song, but strangely sweet
To ears weary of the low,
Dull tramp of winter's sullen feet,
Sandaled in ice and muffed in snow :
Short is his song, but through it runs
A hint of dithyrambs yet to be, —
A sweet suggestiveness that has
The influence of prophecy.

From childhood I have nursed a faith
In bluebird's songs and winds of spring :
They tell me after frost and death
There comes a time of blossoming ;
And after snow and cutting sleet,
The cold, stern mood of Nature yields
To tender warmth, when bare pink feet
Of children press her greening fields.

Sing strong and clear, O bluebird dear !
While all the land with splendor fills,
While maples gladden in the vales,
And plum-trees blossom on the hills :
Float down the wind on shining wings,
And do thy will by grove and stream,
While through my life spring's freshness runs
Like music through a poet's dream.

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE BLUEBIRD

Listen a moment, I pray you ; what was that sound I
heard ?

Wind in the budding branches, the ripple of brooks, or
a bird ?

Hear it again, above us ! and see ! a flutter of wings !
The bluebird knows it is April, and soars toward the sun
and sings.

Never the song of the robin could make my heart so
glad.

When I hear the bluebird singing in spring, I forget to
be sad.

Hear it ! A ripple of music ! Sunshine changed into
song !

It sets me thinking of summer when the days and their
dreams are long.

Winged lute that we call a bluebird, you blend in a silver
strain

The sound of the laughing waters, the patter of spring's
sweet rain,

The voice of the winds, the sunshine, and fragrance of
blossoming things.

Ah ! You are an April poem, that God has dowered
with wings !

EBEN EUGENE REXFORD.

TO A BLUEBIRD

O thou that wear'st the livery of the sky —
Heaven's sovereign stamp upon thee without thrift —
Would that I might like praise with thine uplift !
Pour forth as seemest thou, to One on high,
A breath as pure ! but, ah, too weak am I !
Plume as I may upon a rarer gift,
Watching the weird cloud-phantoms chasing drift,
And on the grass in shadow-waves flow by ;
Or fed with fancies by the rustling firs,
The varied joy of which the mind partakes,
And still the greater boon whence faith awakes ;
Yea, though I should attempt my very most,
'Twould be of song alone but as a ghost,
Compared with thine which now my heart so stirs.

GEORGE P. GUERRIER.

THE SONG SPARROW

Bird of the door-side, warbling clear
In the sprouting or fading year,
Well art thou named from thy own sweet lay
Piped from paling or naked spray
As the smile of the sun breaks through
Chill gray clouds that curtain the blue.

Even when February bleak
Smites with his sleet the traveller's cheek,
While the air has no touch of spring,
Bird of promise ! we hear thee sing

Long ere the first blossom wakes,
Long ere the earliest leaf-bud breaks.

April passes, and May steals by ;
June leads in the sultry July ;
Sweet are the wood-notes, loud and sweet,
Poured from the robin's and hang-bird's seat ;
Thou, as the green months glide away,
Singest with them as gayly as they.

August comes, and the melon and maize
Bask and swell in a fiery blaze ;
Swallows gather, and, southward bound,
Wheel, like a whirl-blast, round and round ;
Thrush and robin their songs forget ;
Thou art cheerfully warbling yet.

Later still, when the sumach spray
Reddens to crimson, day by day ;
When in the orchard, one by one,
Apples drop in the ripening sun,
They who pile them beneath the trees
Hear thy lay in the autumn breeze.

Comes November, sullen and grim,
Spangling with frost the rivulet's brim,
Harsh, hoarse winds from the woodlands tear
Each brown leaf that is clinging there.
Still thou singest, amid the blast,
" Soon is the dreariest season past."

Only when Christmas snow-storms make
Smooth white levels of river and lake,
Sifting the light flakes all day long,
Only then do we miss thy song ;
Sure to hear it again when soon
Climbs the sun to a higher noon.

Now, when tidings that make men pale —
Tidings of slaughter — load the gale ;
While from the distant camp there come
Boom of cannon and roll of drum,
Still thou singest, beside my door,
“ Soon is the stormiest season o’er.”

Ever thus sing cheerfully on,
Bird of Hope ! as in ages gone ;
Sing of spring-time and summer-shades,
Autumn’s pomp when the summer fades,
Storms that fly from the conquering sun,
Peace by enduring valor won.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

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SONG SPARROW

THE SONG-SPARROW

Glimmers gray the leafless thicket
Close beside my garden gate,
Where so light, from post to picket
Hops the sparrow, blithe, sedate ;
Who, with meekly folded wing,
Comes to sun himself and sing.

It was there, perhaps, last year,
That his little house he built ;
For he seems to perk and peer,
And to twitter, too, and tilt
The bare branches in between,
With a fond, familiar mien.

Once, I know, there was a nest,
Held there by a sideward thrust
Of those twigs that touch his breast ;
Though 'tis gone now. Some rude gust
Caught it, over-full of snow, —
Bent the bush, — and stole it so.

Thus our highest holds are lost,
In the ruthless winter's wind,
When, with swift-dismantling frost,
The green woods we dwelt in, thinn'd
Of their leafage, grow too cold
For frail hopes of summer's mold.

But if we, with spring days mellow,
Wake to woeful wrecks of change,
And the sparrow's ritornello
Scaling still its old sweet range ;
Can we do a better thing
Than, with him, still build and sing?

Oh, my sparrow, thou dost breed
Thought in me beyond all telling ;
Shootest through me sunlight, seed,
And the fruitful blessing, with that welling
Ripple of ecstatic rest
Gurgling ever from thy breast !

And thy breezy carol spurs
Vital motion in my blood,
Such as in the sap-wood stirs,
Swell and shapes the pointed bud
Of the lilac, and besets
The hollow thick with violets.

Yet I know not any charm
That can make the fleeting time
Of thy sylvan, faint alarm
Suit itself to human rhyme ;
And my yearning, rhythmic word
Does thee grievous wrong, blithe bird.

So, however thou hast wrought
This wild joy on heart and brain,
It is better left untaught.
Take thou up the song again :
There is nothing sad afloat
On the tide that swells thy throat !

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

From "Dreams and Days," copyright, 1892,
by Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE SONG SPARROW

Fair little scout, that when the iron year
Changes, and the first fleecy clouds deploy,
Comest with such a sudden burst of joy,
Lifting on winter's doomed and broken rear
That song of silvery triumph blithe and clear ;
Not yet quite conscious of the happy glow,
We hungered for some surer touch, and lo !
One morning we awake and thou art here.
And thousands of frail-stemmed hepaticas,
With their crisp leaves and pure and perfect hues,
Light sleepers, ready for the golden news,
Spring at thy note beside the forest ways —
Next to thy song, the first to deck the hour —
The classic lyrist and the classic flower.

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

A SONG-SPARROW IN MARCH

How much do the birds know afloat in the air
Of our changeable, strange human life and its care?

Who can tell what they utter,
With carol and flutter,
Of the joy of our hearts, or the pain hidden there?

In the March morning twilight I turned from a bed
Where a soul had just risen from a form lying dead:

The dim world was ringing
With a song-sparrow's singing
That went up and pierced the gray dawn overhead.

It rose like an ecstasy loosed from the earth;
Like a rapture repeating the song of its birth;

In that clear burst of gladness
Night shook off her sadness,
And death itself echoed the heavenly mirth.

While her sorrowful burden the sufferer laid by,
The little bird passed, and caught up to the sky,

And sang to gray meadow
And mist-wreath and shadow
The triumph a mortal had found it to die.

Oh, the birds cannot tell what it is that they sing!
But to me must the song-sparrow's melody bring,

Whenever I hear it,
The joy of a spirit
Released into life on that dim dawn of spring.

THE MYTH OF THE SONG SPARROW

His mother was the Brook, his sisters were the Reeds,
And they every one applauded when he sang about his
deeds.

His vest was white, his mantle brown, as clear as they
could be,

And his songs were fairly bubbling o'er with melody and
glee.

But an envious Neighbor splashed with mud our Brownie's
coat and vest,

And then a final handful threw that stuck upon his
breast.

The Brook-bird's mother did her best to wash the stains
away,

But there they stuck, and, as it seems, are very like to
stay.

And so he wears the splashes and the mud blotch, as
you see,

But his songs are bubbling over still with melody and glee.

Bird-Lore. — ERNEST SETON THOMPSON.

THE SONG-SPARROW

In this sweet, tranquil afternoon of spring,

While the low sun declines in the clear west,

I sit and hear the blithe song-sparrow sing

His strain of rapture not to be suppressed ;

Pondering life's problem strange, while death draws
near,—

I listen to his dauntless song of cheer.

His shadow flits across the quiet stone :

Like that brief transit is my space of days ;
For, like a flower's faint perfume, youth is flown
Already, and there rests on all life's ways
A dimness ; closer my beloved I clasp,
For all dear things seem slipping from my grasp.

Death touches all ; the light of loving eyes

Goes out in darkness, comfort is withdrawn ;
Lonely, and lonelier still the pathway lies,
Going toward the fading sunset from the dawn :
Yet hark ! while those fine notes the silence break,
As if all trouble were some grave mistake !

Thou little bird, how canst thou thus rejoice,

As if the world had known nor sin nor curse ?
God never meant to mock us with that voice !

That is the key-note of the universe,
That song of perfect trust, of perfect cheer,
Courageous, constant, free of doubt or fear.

My little helper, ah, my comrade sweet,

My old companion in that far-off time
When on life's threshold childhood's wingèd feet
Danced in the sunrise ! Joy was at its prime
When all my heart responded to thy song,
Unconscious of earth's discords harsh and strong.

Now, grown aweary, sad with change and loss,

With the enigma of myself dismayed ;
Poor, save in deep desire to bear the cross

God's hand on his defenceless creatures laid,
With patience,— here I sit this eve of spring,
And listen with bowed head, while thou dost sing.

And slowly all my soul with comfort fills,
And the old hope revives and courage grows ;
Up the deserted shore a fresh tide thrills,
And like a dream the dark mood melts and goes,
And with thy joy again will I rejoice :
God never meant to mock us with that voice !

CELIA THAXTER.

THE SONG-SPARROW

There is a bird I know so well,
It seems as if he must have sung
Beside my crib when I was young ;
Before I knew the way to spell
The name of even the smallest bird
His gentle-joyful song I heard.
Now see if you can tell, my dear,
What bird it is that, every year,
Sings "*Sweet-sweet-sweet—very merry cheer.*"

He comes in March, when winds are strong,
And snow returns to hide the earth ;
But still he warms his heart with mirth,
And waits for May. He lingers long
While flowers fade ; and every day
Repeats his small, contented lay ;
As if to say, we need not fear
The season's change, if love is here
With "*Sweet-sweet-sweet—very merry cheer.*"

He does not wear a Joseph's coat
Of many colours, smart and gay :
His suit is Quaker brown and gray,
With darker patches at his throat.
And yet of all the well-dressed throng
Not one can sing so brave a song.
It makes the pride of looks appear
A vain and foolish thing to hear
His "*Sweet-sweet-sweet — very merry cheer.*"

HENRY VAN DYKE.

From "The Builders and other Poems,"
copyright, 1897, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE ROBIN

Thou need'st not flutter from thy half-built nest
When e'er thou hear'st man's hurrying feet go by,
Fearing his eye for harm may on thee rest,
Or he thy young's unfinished cottage spy ;
All will not heed thee on that swinging bough,
Nor care that round thy shelter spring the leaves,
Nor watch thee on the pool's wet margin now
For clay to plaster straws thy cunning weaves ;
All will not hear thy sweet out-pouring joy
That with morn's stillness blends the voice of song,
For over-anxious cares their souls employ,
That else, upon thy music borne along
And the light wings of heart-ascending prayer,
Had learned that Heaven is pleased thy simple joys to
share.

JONES VERY.

THE ROBIN

His is the sweetest note in all our woods.
The whistle of the meadow-lark is sweet,
The blackbird's rapid chant fills all the vale,
And touchingly sweet the unincumbered song
That the thrush warbles in the green-wood shade ;
Yet is the robin still our sweetest bird,
And beautiful as sweet. His ruddy breast
When poised on high, struck by the unrisen sun,
Glow from its altitude, and to the sight
Presents a burning vestiture of gold ;
And his dark pinions, softly spread, improved
By contrast, shame the blackbird's jetty plumes.
Less wild than others of the tuneful choir,
Oft on the tree that shades the farmer's hut,
Close by his door, the little architect
Fixes his home, — though field-groves, and the woods,
Where the small streams murmur sweetly, loves he most.
Who seeks his nest may find it deftly hid
In fork of branching elm, or poplar shade ;
And sometimes on the lawn ; though rarely he,
The one that sings the sweetest, chooses thus
His habitation. Seek for it in deep
And tangled hollows, up some pretty brook,
That, prattling o'er the loose white pebbles, chides
The echoes with a soft monotony
Of softest music. There, upon the bough
That arches it, of fragrance-breathing birch,
Or kalmia branching in unnumbered forms,
He builds his moss-lined dwelling. First, he lays,

Transverse, dried bents picked from the forest walks ;
Or in the glen, where downward with fell force
The mountain torrent rushes, — these all coated
With slime unsightly. Soon the builder shows
An instinct far surpassing human skill,
And lines it with a layer of soft wool,
Picked from the thorn where brushed the straggled flock ;
Or with an intertexture of soft hairs,
Or moss, or feathers. Finally, complete, —
The usual list of eggs appear, — and lo !
Four in the whole, and softly tinged with blue.
And now the mother-bird the livelong day
Sits on her charge, nor leaves it for her mate,
Save just to dip her bill into the stream,
Or gather needful sustenance. Meanwhile,
The mate, assiduous, guards that mother-bird
Patient upon her nest ; and, at her side,
Or overhead, or on the adverse bank,
Nestled, he all the tedious time beguiles,
Wakes his wild notes, and sings the hours away.

But soon again new duties wake the pair ;
Their young appear. Love knocking at their hearts,
Alert they start, as by sure instinct led, —
That beautiful divinity in birds !
And now they hop along the forest edge,
Or dive into the ravines of the woods,
Or roam the fields, or skim the mossy bank
Shading some runnel with its antique forms,
Pecking for sustenance. Or now they mount

Into mid-air ; or poise on half-shut wing,
Skimming for insects in the dewy beam,
Gayly disporting ; or now, sweeping down
Where the wild brook flows on with ceaseless laughter,
Moisten their bills awhile, then soar away.
And so they weary out the needful hours,
Preaching, meanwhile, sound lesson unto man !
Till plump, and fledged, their little ones essay
Their native element. At first they fail :
Flutter awhile ; then, screaming, sink plump down,
Prizes for school-boys. Yet the more escape ;
And, wiser grown and stronger, soon their wings
Obedient send them forth ; when, confident,
They try the forest tops, or skim the flood,
Or fly up in the skirts of the white clouds, —
Till, all at once, they start, a mirthful throng,
Burst into voice, and the wide forest rings !

WILLIAM THOMPSON BACON.

ROBIN'S THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATION

Ho all ye Massachusetts birds !
To Boston Common flock ;
And we will raise a hymn of praise
To make the State House rock.

For never since the white man took
Our Heaven-born rights away
Have we had cause to keep as now
A glad Thanksgiving Day.

The old Bay State — thank God ! — has made
Her feathered children free ;
And birds and men together dwell
In peace and amity.

Big yellowhammer, fetch your drum
And beat a “rat-tat-too ;”
And all the downy woodpeckers
Shall furnish sticks for you.

.

Come, busy nuthatch, with your awl,
But never mind your notes,
Unless you’ve dropped your nasal chords
And tuned your husky throats.

Dear Quaker titmouse, fetch along
In Chickadese your score ;
And don’t forget your “phœbe” song
To meet the first encore.

And all ye little sparrow birds,
Put on your daintiest frills ;
And fill your bosoms full of notes
Of quavers, and of trills.

You modest creeper clad in brown,
They say you sing — in firs —
If so, you’ll surely come to town,
Nor fear the milliners.

.
The grateful choir of winter birds
Shall make the welkin ring
'Til all the migrants hurry north
To see if it is spring.

And when the summer birds come back,
To stay in Fatherland,
We'll join the coats of varied hue
And form a patriot band.

To rid the soil of every foe,
To guard the leafy trees,
And make of all the noxious weeds
Our wholesome granaries.

And now three cheers, and robins lead,
For legislators kind ;
And three for Hoar whom we adore
For speaking out our mind.

And all ye little female birds,
Join in as heart delights ;
For friendly Hoar — God bless him more ! —
Believes in equal rights.

Then for our State, to latest time
Millennial joy we'll seek ;
While o'er and o'er we sing of Hoar,
The champion of the weak.

October, 1897, after the passage of a protective law largely due to Senator Hoar's Bird Petition to the General Court of Massachusetts.

ELLA GILBERT IVES.

TAMPA ROBINS

The robin laughed in the orange-tree :
“ Ho, windy North, a fig for thee :
While breasts are red and wings are bold
And green trees wave us globes of gold,
Time’s scythe shall reap but bliss for me,
Sunlight, song, and the orange-tree.

“ Burn, golden globes in leafy sky,
My orange planets : crimson I
Will shine and shoot among the spheres
(Blithe meteor that no mortal fears)
And thrid the heavenly orange-tree
With orbits bright of minstrelsy.

“ If that I hate wild winter’s spite —
The gibbet trees, the world in white,
The sky but gray wind over a grave —
Why should I ache, the season’s slave ?
I’ll sing from the top of the orange-tree
Gramercy, winter’s tyranny.

“ I’ll south with the sun, and keep my clime ;
My wing is king of the summer-time ;
My breast to the sun his torch shall hold ;
And I’ll call down through the green and gold,
*Time, take thy scythe, reap bliss for me,
Bestir thee under the orange-tree.”*

SIDNEY LANIER.

From “ Poems of Sidney Lanier,” copyright, 1884, 1891, by Mary D. Lanier,
and published by Charles Scribner’s Sons.

WHY ROBIN'S BREAST IS RED

The Saviour bowed beneath his cross,
Clomb up the dreary hill,
While from his agonizing brow
Ran many a crimson rill.
The brawny Roman thrust him on
With unrelenting hand,
Till, staggering slowly 'mid the crowd,
He sank upon the sand.

A little song-bird hovering near,
That immemorial day,
Fluttered around and strove to wrench
One single thorn away.
The cruel spike impaled his breast,
And thus, 'tis sweetly said,
The robin has his silver vest
Incarnadined with red !

Ah, Jesu ! Jesu ! Prince of Peace,
My dolor and my sighs
Reveal the lesson taught by this
Winged Ishmael of the skies.
I, in the palace of delight,
Or caverns of despair,
Have plucked no thorns from thy dear brow,
But planted thousands there !

JAMES R. RANDALL.

THE ROBIN

My old Welsh neighbor over the way
Crept slowly out in the sun of spring,
Pushed from her ears the locks of gray,
And listened to hear the robins sing.

Her grandson, playing at marbles, stopped,
And, cruel in sport as boys will be,
Tossed a stone at the bird, who hopped
From bough to bough in the apple-tree.

"Nay!" said the grandmother, "have you not heard,
My poor, bad boy! of the fiery pit,
And how, drop by drop, this merciful bird
Carries the water that quenches it?"

"He brings cool dew in his little bill,
And lets it fall on the souls of sin:
You can see the mark on his red breast still
Of fires that scorch as he drops it in.

"My poor Bron rhuddyn! my breast-burned bird!
Singing so sweetly from limb to limb,
Very dear to the heart of Our Lord
Is he who pities the lost like Him!"

"Amen!" I said to the beautiful myth;
"Sing, bird of God, in my heart as well:
Each good thought is a drop wherewith
To cool and and lessen the fires of hell.

“ Prayers of love like raindrops fall,
Tears of pity are cooling dew,
And dear to the heart of Our Lord are all
Who suffer like Him in the good they do ! ”

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

ROBIN'S MATE

Everybody praises Robin,
Singing early, singing late ;
But who ever thinks of saying
A good word for Robin's Mate ?

Yet she's everything to Robin,
Silent partner though she be ;
Source and theme and inspiration
Of each madrigal and glee.

For as she with mute devotion
Shapes and curves the plastic nest,
Fashioning a tiny cradle,
With the pressure of her breast ;

So the love in that soft bosom
Moulds his being as 'twere clay,
Prints upon his breast the music
Of his most impassioned lay.

And, when next you praise the Robin
Flinging wide the tuneful gate
To his eager brood of love-notes,
Don't forget the Robin's Mate.

ELLA GILBERT IVES.

HOW THE ROBIN CAME

AN ALGONQUIN LEGEND

Happy young friends, sit by me,
Under May's blown apple-tree,
While these home-birds in and out
Through the blossoms flit about.
Hear a story, strange and old,
By the wild red Indians told,
How the robin came to be :
Once a great chief left his son —
Well-beloved, his only one —
When the boy was well-nigh grown,
In the trial-lodge alone.
Left for tortures long and slow,
Youths like him must undergo,
Who their pride of manhood test,
Lacking water, food, and rest.

Seven days the fast he kept,
Seven nights he never slept.
Then the young boy, wrung with pain,
Weak from nature's overstrain,
Faltering, moaned a low complaint :
" Spare me, father, for I faint ! "
But the chieftain, haughty-eyed,
Hid his pity in his pride.
" You shall be a hunter good,
Knowing never lack of food ;
You shall be a warrior great,

Wise as fox and strong as bear ;
Many scalps your belt shall wear,
If with patient heart you wait
Bravely till your task is done.
Better you should starving die
Than that boy and squaw should cry
Shame upon your father's son !”

When next morn the sun's first rays
Glistened on the hemlock sprays,
Straight that lodge the old chief sought,
And boiled samp and moose meat brought.
“ Rise and eat, my son ! ” he said.
Lo, he found the poor boy dead !
As with grief his grave they made,
And his bow beside him laid,
Pipe, and knife, and wampum-braid.
On the lodge-top overhead,
Preening smooth its breast of red
And the brown coat that it wore,
Sat a bird, unknown before.
And as if with human tongue,
“ Mourn me not,” it said, or sung ;
“ I, a bird, am still your son,
Happier than if hunter fleet,
Or a brave, before your feet
Laying scalps in battle won.
Friend of man, my song shall cheer
Lodge and corn-land ; hovering near
To each wigwam I shall bring
Tidings of the coming spring ;

Every child my voice shall know
In the moon of melting snow,
When the maple's red bud swells,
And the wind-flower lifts its bells.
As their fond companion
Men shall henceforth own your son,
And my song shall testify
That of human kin am I."

Thus the Indian legend saith
How, at first, the robin came
With a sweeter life than death,
Bird for boy, and still the same.
If my young friends doubt that this
Is the robin's genesis,
Not in vain is still the myth
If a truth be found therewith :
Unto gentleness belong
Gifts unknown to pride and wrong ;
Happier far than hate is praise, —
He who sings than he who slays.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

PHOEBE

Ere pales in Heaven the morning star,
A bird, the loneliest of its kind,
Hears Dawn's faint footfall from afar;
While all its mates are dumb and blind.

It is a wee sad-colored thing,
As shy and secret as a maid
That, ere in choir the robins sing,
Pipes its own name like one afraid.

It seems pain-prompted to repeat
The story of some ancient ill,
But *Phæbe ! Phæbe !* sadly sweet,
Is all it says, and then is still.

It calls and listens. Earth and sky,
Hushed by the pathos of its fate,
Listen : no whisper of reply
Comes from its doom-dissevered mate.

Phæbe ! it calls and calls again,
And Ovid, could he but have heard,
Had hung a legendary pain
About the memory of the bird.

A pain articulate so long
In penance of some mouldered crime
Whose ghost still flies the Furies' thong
Down the waste solitudes of time.

Waif of the young World's wonder-hour,
When gods found mortal maidens fair,
And will malign was joined with power
Love's kindly laws to overbear.

Like Progne, did it feel the stress
And coil of the prevailing words
Close round its being, and compress
Man's ampler nature to a bird's?

One only memory left of all
The motley crowd of vanished scenes,
Hers, and vain impulse to recall
By repetition what it means.

Phæbe! is all it has to say
In plaintive cadence o'er and o'er,
Like children that have lost their way,
And know their names, but nothing more.

Is it a type, since Nature's lyre
Vibrates to every note in man,
Of that insatiable desire,
Meant to be so since life began?

I, in strange lands at gray of dawn,
Wakeful, have heard that fruitless plaint
Through memory's chambers deep withdrawn
Renew its iterations faint.

So nigh ! yet from remotest years
It summons back its magic, rife
With longings unappeased, and tears
Drawn from the very source of life.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE PHŒBE-BIRD (A REPLY)

Yes, I was wrong about the phœbe-bird,—
Two songs it has, and both of them I've heard :
I did not know those strains of joy and sorrow
Came from one throat, or that each note could borrow
Strength from the other, making one more brave
And one as sad as rain-drops on a grave.

But thus it is. Two songs have men and maidens :
One is for hey-day, one for sorrow's cadence.
Our voices vary with the changing seasons
Of life's long years, for deep and natural reasons.
Therefore despair not. Think not you have altered
If at some time the gayer note has faltered.
We are as God has made us. Gladness, pain,
Delight and death, and moods of bliss or bane,
With love and hate, or good and evil — all,
At separate times, in separate accents call ;
Yet 'tis the same heart-throb within the breast
That gives an impulse to our worst and best.
I doubt not when our earthly cries are ended,
The listener finds them in one music blended.

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

From " Dreams and Days."

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TO THE PHŒBE BIRD

Each blessed morning,
Much to my scorning,
You're up and waiting for Phœbe dear ;
And still your calling,
When day is falling,
Doleful as ever salutes the ear.

We all admire
The constant fire
Supposed to burn in lover's breast ;
Yet glints of reason
May do no treason
To faith and love and all the rest.

This endless sighing,
These threats of dying,
Only provoke the maiden's scorn ;
'Tis arrant folly
Not to be jolly
Despite of any maid that's born !

Your mournful wailing
Is unavailing ;
You'd more effect if you should swear !
This heartless Phœbe —
Whoever *she* be —
For all your sighs will nothing care.

Why don't you flout her,
And vow you doubt her,
And rate her for an arrant jade?
You'd soon subdue her
If so you'd woo her;
She'll never love till she's afraid.

You, silly songster,
Protest, "Thou wrong'st her!"
But I've been longer born than you;
I know the sex, sir,
Their tricks to vex, sir;
Flame when you scorn, ice when you sue!

ARLO BATES.

PEWEE

Sweet promise of the sunny days,
Thy restless form is dear to me;
Though homely are thy plaintive lays,
Thy simple carol, brown pee-wee.

I see thee build thy rustic fort
Beneath the bridge's mouldering arch;
And joy to hear thy love's report
Above the boisterous breath of March.

Thou comest from distant wood or bower
To scenes which smiled upon thy birth,
While trees are bare, and scarce a flower
Is scattered o'er the cold, moist earth;

While Spring is in her changeful moods,
And now unlocks the icy rill ;
When in the hollows of the woods
The unsunned snow is lingering still.

Thou living memory of the days
When I was young and gay like thee,
Thou lead'st me thro' the gathering haze
Back to the light of infancy ;

To morning hours when oft I trod
The spongy fields in search of thee,
When Draba starred the chilly sod
In a pale, tiny galaxy.

Once, in a kindly winter day,
By Alabama's waters rude,
I saw thee on the mossy spray
That stretched in leafless solitude,

Upon the steep bank's crumbling side,
Enriched with many a fossil shell ;
And truly, 'twas with joy and pride
I saw thee in thy precinct dwell.

For then it lost its alien face
And Fancy dwelt in home once more ;
I seemed in early Spring's embrace,
Beside my far ancestral door.

And when shall come the fatal night,
Amid my weakness, grief, and pain,
I would behold thy circling flight,
And die while listening to thy strain.

T. A. CONRAD.

THE FISH-HAWK ¹ (OSPREY)

Soon as the sun, great ruler of the year,
Bends to our northern clime his bright career,
And from the caves of ocean calls from sleep
The finny shoals and myriads of the deep ;
When freezing tempests back to Greenland ride,
And day and night the equal hours divide ;
True to the season, o'er our sea-beat shore,
The sailing osprey high is seen to soar,
With broad unmoving wing, and, circling slow,
Marks each loose straggler in the deep below ;
Sweeps down like lightning ! plunges with a roar !
And bears his struggling victim to the shore.
The long-housed fisherman beholds with joy
The well-known signals of his rough employ ;
And as he bears his nets and oars along,
Thus hails the welcome season with a song.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

¹“ The regular arrival of this noted bird at the vernal equinox, when the busy season of fishing commences, adds peculiar interest to its first appearance, and procures it many a benediction from the fishermen.”

THE FISHERMAN'S HYMN

The osprey sails above the sound ;
The geese are gone, the gulls are flying ;
The herring shoals swarm thick around ;
The nets are launched, the boats are plying.
Yo, ho, my hearts ! let's seek the deep,
Raise high the song, and cheerly wish her,
Still as the bending net we sweep,
" God bless the Fish hawk and the fisher ! "

She brings us fish — she brings us Spring,
Good times, fair weather, warmth, and plenty ;
Fine store of shad, trout, herring, ling,
Sheep's-head and drum, and old wives dainty.
Yo, ho, my hearts ! let's seek the deep,
Ply every oar, and cheerly wish her,
Still as the bending net we sweep,
" God bless the Fish hawk and the fisher ! "

She rears her young on yonder tree ;
She leaves her faithful mate to mind 'em ;
Like us, for fish she sails to sea,
And, plunging, shows us where to find 'em.
Yo, ho, my hearts ! let's seek the deep,
Ply every oar, and cheerly wish her,
While slow the bending net we sweep,
" God bless the Fish hawk and the fisher ! "

ALEXANDER WILSON.

THE CROW

Then it is a distant cawing,
Growing louder — coming nearer,
Tells of crows returning inland
From their winter on the marshes.

Iridescent is their plumage,
Loud their voices, bold their clamor,
In the pools and shallows wading ;
Or in overflowing meadows
Searching for the waste of winter —
Scraps and berries freed by thawing.
Weird their notes, and hoarse their croaking ;
Silent only when the night comes.

FRANK BOLLES.

Over the tree-tops yonder flies a crow
That boldly vents his unpopular caw,
And breasts the stubborn wind to gain the shore,
And cram his crop with what the tide brings in.

A Morning Pastoral. — HENRY ABBEY.



APRIL

*Only once more to feel the coming spring,
As the birds feel it when it bids them sing.*

Agassiz. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

*Bid the little homely sparrows,
Chirping in the cold and rain,
Their impatient, sweet complaining,
Sing out from their hearts again,
Bid them set themselves to mating,
Cooing love in softest words,
Crowd their nests, all cold and empty,
Full of little callow birds.*

An April Welcome. — PHOEBE CARY.

*Sparrows far off, and nearer, April's bird,
Blue-coated, flying before from tree to tree,
Courageous sing a delicate overture
To lead the tardy concert of the year.*

Musketaquid. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

WILD GEESE

A far, strange sound through the night,
A dauntless and resolute cry,
Clear in the tempest's despite,
Ringing so wild and so high.

Darkness and tumult and dread,
Rain and the battling of gales,
Yet cleaving the storm overhead,
The wedge of the wild geese sails.

Pushing their perilous way,
Buffeted, beaten, and vexed ;
Steadfast by night and by day,
Weary, but never perplexed ;

Sure that the land of their hope
Waits beyond tempest and dread,
Sure that the dark where they grope
Shall glow with the morning red !

Clangor that pierces the storm
Dropped from the gloom of the sky !
I sit by my hearth-fire warm
And thrill to that purposeful cry.

Strong as a challenge sent out,
Rousing the timorous heart
To battle with fear and with doubt,
Courageously bearing its part.

O birds in the wild, wild sky !
Would I could so follow God's way

Through darkness, unquestioning why,
With only one thought — to obey !

CELIA THAXTER.

THE FLIGHT OF THE GEESE

I hear the low wind wash the softening snow,
The low tide loiter down the shore. The night
Full filled with April forecast, hath no light.
The salt wave on the sedge-flat pulses slow.
Through the hid furrows lisp in murmurous flow
The thaw's shy ministers ; and hark ! The height
Of heaven grows weird and loud with unseen flight
Of strong hosts prophesying as they go !

High through the drenched and hollow night their wings
Beat northward hard on winter's trail. The sound
Of their confused and solemn voices, borne
Athwart the dark to their long Arctic morn,
Comes with a sanction and an awe profound,
A boding of unknown, foreshadowed things.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

THE PASSING OF THE WILD GEESE

Ye white-winged prophets of the coming spring,
With trumpet tones ye make the welkin ring.
Thrice glad ye make us with your wild hosannas,
Winging your way from sunny, green savannas.
We watch and see your light forms disappear
Far in the blue, transparent atmosphere,
While echoes in our breast your glad refrain,
And faith grows quick that spring will come again.

RICHARD HOE BARROWS.

BIRDS IN APRIL

Here when cloudless April days begin,
And the quaint crows flock thicker day by day,
Filling the forests with a pleasant din,
And the soiled snow creeps secretly away,
Comes the small busy sparrow, primed with glee,
First preacher in the naked wilderness,
Piping an end to all the long distress
From every fence and every leafless tree.

The Meadow. — ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

The birds are here, for all the season's late ;
They take the sun's height, an' don' never wait ;
Soon'z he officially declares it's spring
Their light hearts lift 'em on a north'ard wing,
An' th' ain't an acre, fur ez you can hear,
Can't by the music tell the time o' year.

Biglow Papers. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

The crows go by, a noisy throng ;
About the meadows all day long
The shore-lark drops his brittle song ;
And up the leafless tree
The nuthatch runs, and nods, and clings ;
The bluebird dips with flashing wings,
The robin flutes, the sparrow sings,
And the swallows float and flee.

April in the Hills. — ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

Glad of the spring, and of love, and of morning the wild
birds were singing ;
Jays to each other called harshly, then mellowly fluted
together ;
Sang the oriole songs as golden and gay as his plumage ;
Pensively piped the querulous quails their greetings un-
frequent,
While, on the meadow elm, the meadow lark gushed
forth in music,
Rapt, exultant, and shaken with the great joy of his
singing ;
Over the river, loud-chattering, aloft in the air, the
kingfisher
Hung, ere he dropped, like a bolt, in the water beneath
him ;
Gossiping, out of the bank flew myriad twittering
swallows ;
And in the boughs of the sycamores quarrelled and
clamored the blackbirds.

The Movers. — WILLIAM D. HOWELLS.

SPRING IN NEW ENGLAND

Each day are heard, and almost every hour,
New notes to swell the music of the groves,
And soon the latest of the feathered train
At evening twilight come ; — the lonely snipe,
O'er marshy fields, high in the dusky air,
Invisible, but, with faint, tremulous tones,
Hovering or playing o'er the listener's head ; —
And, in mid-air, the sportive night-hawk, seen
Flying awhile at random, uttering oft

A cheerful cry, attended with a shake
Of level pinions, dark, but when upturned
Against the brightness of the western sky,
One white plume showing in the midst of each,
Then far down diving with a hollow sound ;
And, deep at first within the distant wood,
The whip-poor-will, her name her only song.
She, soon as children from the noisy sport
Of whooping, laughing, talking with all tones,
To hear the echoes of the empty barn,
Are by her voice diverted, and held mute,
Comes to the margin of the nearest grove ;
And when the twilight, deepened into night,
Calls them within, close to the house she comes,
And on its dark side, haply on the step
Of unfrequented door, lighting unseen,
Breaks into strains articulate and clear,
The closing sometimes quickened as in sport.
Now, animate throughout, from morn to eve
All harmony, activity, and joy,
Is lovely nature, as in her blest prime.
The robin to the garden, or green yard,
Close to the door repairs to build again
Within her wonted tree ; and at her work
Seems doubly busy for her past delay.
Along the surface of the winding stream,
Pursuing every turn, gay swallows skim,
Or round the borders of the spacious lawn
Fly in repeated circles, rising o'er
Hillock and fence with motion serpentine,

Easy and light. One snatches from the ground
A downy feather, and then upward springs,
Followed by others, but oft drops it soon,
In playful mood, or from too slight a hold,
When all at once dart at the falling prize.
The flippant blackbird with light yellow crown,
Hangs fluttering in the air, and chatters thick
Till her breath fail, when, breaking off, she drops
On the next tree, and on its highest limb,
Or some tall flag, and gently rocking, sits,
Her strain repeating. With sonorous notes
Of every tone, mixed in confusion sweet,
All chanted in the fulness of delight,
The forest rings : — where, far around enclosed
With bushy sides, and covered high above
With foliage thick, supported by bare trunks,
Like pillars rising to support a roof,
It seems a temple vast, the space within
Rings loud and clear with thrilling melody.
Apart, but near the choir, with voice distinct,
The merry mocking-bird together links
In one continued song their different notes,
Adding new life and sweetness to them all.

The Age of Benevolence. — CARLOS WILCOX.

TO AN EARLY SWALLOW

My little bird of the air,
If thou dost know, then tell me the sweet reason
Thou comest alway, duly in thy season,
To build and pair.
For still we hear thee twittering round the eaves



W.M.H.

BLUE-BACKED SWALLOW

Ere yet the attentive cloud of April lowers
Up from their darkened heath to call the flowers,
 Where, all the rough, hard weather
 They kept together,
Under their low brown roof of withered leaves.

And for a moment still
Thy ever-tuneful bill,
And tell me, and I pray thee tell me true,
If any cruel care thy bosom frets,
The while thou flittest, plowlike, through the air —
 Thy wings so swift and slim,
 Turned downward, darkly dim,
Like furrows on a ground of violets.

Nay, tell me not, my swallow,
 But have thy pretty way,
And prosperously follow
 The leading of the sunshine all the day.
 Thy virtuous example
Maketh my foolish questions answer ample.
It is thy large delights keep open wide
 Thy little mouth ; thou hast no pain to hide :
And when thou leavest all the green-topped woods
Pining below, and with melodious floods
Flatterest the heavy clouds, it is, I know,
Because, my bird, thou canst not choose but go
 Higher and ever higher
 Into the purple fire
That lights the morning meadows with heart's ease,
And sticks the hillsides full of primroses.

But tell me, my good bird,
If thou canst tune thy tongue to any word
Wherewith to answer — pray thee tell me this :
 Where gottest thou thy song
 Still thrilling all day long,
Slivered to fragments by its very bliss !
 Not, as I guess,
 Of any whistling swain,
With cheek as richly russet as the grain
Sown in his furrows ; nor, I further guess,
 Of any shepherdess,
 Whose tender heart did drag
Through the dim hollows of her golden flag
After a faithless love — while far and near
 The waterfalls, to hear,
Clung by their white arms to the cold, deaf rocks,
 And all the unkempt flocks
 Strayed idly. Nay, I know,
If ever any love-lorn maid did blow
On such a pitiful pipe, thou didst not get
In such sad wise thy heart to music set.

So, lower not down to me
From its high home thy ever-busy wing :
I know right well thy song was shaped for thee
 By His unwearying power
Who makes the days about the Easter flower
Like gardens round the chamber of a king.
And whether, when the sobering year hath run
His brief course out, and thou away dost hie

To find thy pleasant summer company ;
Or whether, my brown darling of the sun,
When first the South, to welcome up the May,
Hangs wide her saffron gate,
And thou, from the uprising of the day
Till eventide in shadow round thee closes,
Pourest thy joyance over field and wood,
As if thy very blood
Were drawn from out the young hearts of the roses.

'Tis all to celebrate
And all to praise
The careful kindness of His gracious ways
Who builds the golden weather
So tenderly about thy houseless brood —
Thy unfledged homeless brood, and thee together.

Ah ! these are the sweet reasons,
My little swimmer of the seas and air,
Thou comest, goest, duly in thy season ;
And furthermore, that all men everywhere
May learn from thy enjoyment
That that which maketh life most good and fair
Is heavenly employment.

ALICE CARY.

THE FIRST MOCKING-BIRD IN SPRING

Winged poet of vernal ethers !

Ah ! where hast thou lingered long ?

I have missed thy passionate, skyward flights

And the trills of thy changeful song.

Hast thou been in the hearts of woodlands old

Half dreaming, and, drowsed by the winter's cold,

Just crooning the ghost of thy springtide lay

To the listless shadows, benumbed and gray ?

Or hast thou strayed by a tropic shore,

And lavished, O sylvan troubadour !

The boundless wealth of thy music free

On the dimpling waves of the Southland sea ?

What matter ? Thou comest with magic strain,

To the morning haunts of thy life again,

And thy melodies fall in a rhythmic rain.



The wren and the field-lark listen

To the gush from their laureate's throat ;

And the bluebird stops on the oak to catch

Each rounded and perfect note.

The sparrow, his pert head reared aloft,

Has ceased to chirp in the grassy croft,

And is bending the curves of his tiny ear

In the *pose* of a critic wise, to hear.

A blackbird, perched on a glistening gum,

Seems lost in a rapture, deep and dumb ;

And as eagerly still in his trancèd hush,

'Mid the copse beneath, is a clear-eyed thrush.

No longer the dove by the thorn-tree root
Moans sad and soft as a far-off flute.
All Nature is hearkening, charmed and mute.

We scarce can deem it a marvel,
For the songs *our* nightingale sings
Throb warm and sweet with the rhythmic beat
Of the fervors of countless springs.
All beautiful measures of sky and earth
Outpour in a second and rarer birth
From that mellow throat. When the winds are
whist,
And he follows his mate to their sunset tryst,
Where the wedded myrtles and jasmine twine,
Óh! the swell of his music is half divine!
And I vaguely wonder, O bird! can it be
That a human spirit hath part in thee?
Some Lesbian singer's who died perchance
Too soon in the summer of Greek romance,
But the rich reserves of whose broken lay,
In some mystical, wild, undreamed-of way,
Find voice in thy bountiful strains to-day!

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

TO THE MOCKING-BIRD

Carolling bird, that merrily night and day
Teltest thy raptures from the rustling spray,
And wakest the morning with thy varied lay,
Singing thy matins, —

When we have come to hear thy sweet oblation
Of love and joyance from thy sylvan station,
Why in the place of musical cantation
Balk us with pratings?

We stroll by moonlight in the dusky forest
Where the tall cypress shields thee, fervent chorist !
And sit in haunts of echoes when thou pourest
Thy woodland solo.

Hark ! from the next green tree thy song commences ;
Music and discord join to mock the senses,
Repeated from the tree-tops and the fences,
From hill and hollow !

A hundred voices mingle with thy clamor ;
Bird, beast, and reptile take part in thy drama ;
Outspeak they all in turn without a stammer, —
Brisk polyglot !

Voices of kill-deer, plover, duck, and dotterel ;
Notes, bubbling, hissing, mellow, sharp, and guttural,
Of catbird, cat, or cartwheel, thou canst utter all,
And all untaught.

The raven's croak, the chirrup of the sparrow,
The jay's harsh note, the creaking of a barrow,
The hoot of owls, all join the soul to harrow

And grate the ear.
We listen to thy quaint soliloquizing,
As if all creatures thou wert catechizing,
Tuning their voices, and their notes revising
From far and near.

Sweet bird, that surely lovest the "noise of folly,"
Most musical, but never melancholy ;
Disturber of the hour that should be holy,
With sounds prodigious,
Fie on thee ! O thou feathered Paganini !
To use thy little pipes to squawk and whinny,
And emulate the hinge and spinning-jenny,
Making night hideous.

Provoking melodist ! why canst thou breathe us
No thrilling harmony, no charming pathos,
No cheerful song of love, without a bathos ?

The Furies take thee !

Blast thy obstreperous mirth, thy foolish chatter, —
Gag thee, exhaust thy breath, and stop thy clatter,
And change thee to a beast, thou senseless prater !
Naught else can check thee !

A lengthened pause ensues ; but hark again !
From the near woodland, stealing o'er the plain,
Comes forth a sweeter and a holier strain !

Listening delighted,
The gales breathe softly, as they bear along
The warbled treasure, the tumultuous throng
Of notes that swell accordant in the song,
As love is plighted.

The echoes, joyful, from their vocal cell,
Leap with the wingèd sounds o'er hill and dell,
With kindling fervor as the chimes they tell
 To wakeful even :
They melt upon the ear ; they float away,
They rise, they sink, they hasten, they delay,
And hold the listener with bewitching sway,
 Like sounds from heaven.

WILSON FLAGG.

From "A Year with the Birds," published by
Educational Publishing Company.

TO OUR MOCKING-BIRD

DIED OF A CAT, MAY, 1878

I

Trillets of humor, — shrewdest whistle-wit, —
 Contralto cadences of grave desire
Such as from off the passionate Indian pyre
Drift down through sandal-odored flames that split
About the slim young widow who doth sit
 And sing above, — midnights of tone entire, —
 Tissues of moonlight shot with songs of fire ;
Bright drops of tune, from oceans infinite
Of melody, sipped off the thin-edged wave
And trickling down the beak, — discourses brave
 Of serious matter that no man may guess, —
 Good-fellow greetings, cries of light distress —
 All these but now within the house we heard.
 O Death, wast thou too deaf to hear the bird?

II

Ah me, though never an ear for song, thou hast
A tireless tooth for songsters : thus of late
Thou camest, Death, thou Cat ! and leap'st my gate,
And, long ere Love could follow, thou hadst passed
Within and snatched away, how fast, how fast,
My bird — wit, songs, and all — thy richest freight
Since that fell time when in some wink of fate
Thy yellow claws unsheathed and stretched, and cast
Sharp hold on Keats, and dragged him slow away,
And harried him with hope and horrid play —
Ay, him, the world's best wood-bird, wise with song —
Till thou hadst wrought thine own last mortal wrong.
'Twas wrong ! 'twas wrong ! I care not, *wrong's*
the word —
To munch our Keats and crunch our mocking-bird.

III

Nay, Bird ; my grief gainsays the Lord's best right.
The Lord was fain, at some late festal time,
That Keats should set all Heaven's woods in rhyme,
And thou in bird-notes. Lo, this tearful night,
Methinks I see thee, fresh from death's despite,
Perched in a palm-grove, wild with pantomime,
O'er blissful companies couched in shady thyme,
— Methinks I hear thy silver whistlings bright
Mix with the mighty discourse of the wise,
Till broad Beethoven, deaf no more, and Keats,
'Midst of much talk, uplift their smiling eyes,
And mark the music of thy wood-conceits,
And halfway pause on some large, courteous word,
And call thee " Brother," O thou Heavenly Bird !

SIDNEY LANIER.

From " Poems of Sidney Lanier," copyright, 1884, 1891, by Mary D. Lanier,
and published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

TO A MOCKING-BIRD

The name thou wearest does thee grievous wrong ;
No mimic thou : that voice is thine alone.
The poets sing but strains of Shakespeare's song ;
The birds, but notes of thine imperial own.

HENRY JEROME STOCKARD.

MOCKING-BIRD

Then from a neighboring thicket the mocking-bird, wild-
est of singers,
Swinging aloft on a willow spray that hung o'er the water,
Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious
music
That the whole air, and the woods, and the waves,
seemed silent to listen.
Plaintive at first were the tones and sad ; then soaring
to madness
Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied
Bacchantes.
Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamenta-
tion ;
Till, having gathered them all, he flung them abroad in
derision,
As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the tree-
tops
Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower on the
branches.

• Evangeline. — HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

Nor did lack

Sweet music to the magic of the scene :
The little crimson-breasted Nonpareil
Was there, his tiny feet scarce bending down
The silken tendril that he lighted on
To pour his love notes ; and in russet coat,
Most homely, like true genius bursting forth
In spite of adverse fortune, a full choir
Within himself, the merry Mock Bird sate,
Filling the air with melody ; and at times,
In the rapt fervor of his sweetest song,
His quivering form would spring into the sky
In spiral circles, as if he would catch
New powers from kindred warblers in the clouds
Who would bend down to greet him !

WILLIAM HENRY TIMROD.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

From the vale, what music ringing
Fills the bosom of the night,
On the sense, entrancèd, flinging
Spells of witchery and delight !
O'er magnolia, lime, and cedar,
From yon locust-top, it swells
Like the chant of serenader
Or the chimes of silver bells !
Listen ! dearest, listen to it !
Sweeter sounds were never heard !
'Tis the song of that wild poet, —
Mime and minstrel, — Mocking-Bird.

See him, swinging in his glory,
On yon topmost bending limb !
Carolling his amorous story,
Like some wild crusader's hymn.
Now it faints in tones delicious
As the first low vow of love !
Now it bursts in swells capricious
All the moonlit vale above !
Listen ! dearest, etc.

Why is't thus, this sylvan Petrarch
Pours all night his serenade ?
'Tis for some proud woodland Laura
His sad sonnets all are made !
But he changes now his measure, —
Gladness bubbling from his mouth, —
Jest and gibe, and mimic pleasure,
Winged Anacreon of the South !
Listen ! dearest, etc.

Bird of music, wit, and gladness,
Troubadour of sunny climes,
Disenchanter of all sadness, —
Would thine art were in my rhymes !
O'er the heart that's beating by me
I would weave a spell divine ;
Is there aught she could deny me
Drinking in such strains as thine ?
Listen ! dearest, etc.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

Superb and sole, upon a plumèd spray
That o'er the general leafage boldly grew,
He summ'd the woods in song ; or typic drew
The watch of hungry hawks, the lone dismay
Of languid doves when long their lovers stray,
And all birds' passion-plays that sprinkle dew
At morn in brake or bosky avenue.
Whate'er birds did or dreamed, this bird could say.
Then down he shot, bounced airily along
The sward, twitched in a grasshopper, made song
Midflight, perched, prinked, and to his art again.
Sweet Science, this large riddle read me plain :
How may the death of that dull insect be
The life of yon trim Shakspeare on the tree?

SIDNEY LANIER.

From "Poems of Sidney Lanier," copyright, 1884, 1891, by Mary D. Lanier,
and published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

TO AN ENGLISH NIGHTINGALE

Hear !

Hear !

Oh, will you hear ?

Reed-notes clear

(Fluted in flowery, May-drowsed solitudes,
Filtered through sun-steeped woods) ;

A challenge hurled

To all the singing world !

I, the mocking-bird,

Am stirred

With song's wild rapture ; and the prophet's mood

Grows stronger in me with each freer breath

Of balm-buds sweet as meth ;

I am no singer rude ;

Here, drink my melody, spiced with things as good

As made the bragget that old Chaucer brewed.

.

What cheer !

What cheer !

That is the cardinal grosbeak's way,

With his sooty face and his coat so red ;

Too shrill, too red, too loud and gay

(Top-knotted like a jay's),

Too crude for the critical eye and ear !

In a wild plum-thicket of Tennessee

He flung a challenge out to me,

And, as Marsyas, easily

Beaten and flayed alive was he.

Cheer ! cheer !
What cheer !
Oh, all the world shall be glad to hear !
And the nightingale
Shall fail
When I burst forth with my freedom song
So rich and strong !

Oh !
Ho !
That's a brown thrush
In the underbrush,
Conceited, self-conscious, inclined to gush ;
His is a voice that will not wear ;
Faulty timbre and volume weak,
He wrings from his beak
A spiral squeak
That bores like a gimlet through the air !
And the catbird, too,
With its feline mew,
Is only fit for the springe and the snare !

I like
The shrike,
Because, with a thorn for a guillotine,
He does his work so well and clean.
A critic keen —
A practical bird,
Whose common sense
Must be immense,

For, tell me, who has ever heard
 Of such a thing
 As a loggerhead shrike that tried to sing?
 Hear! See! Oh, see!
 What do you think of me?
 Do I sing by rote,
 Or by note?
 Have I a parrot's echo-throat?
 Oh, no! I caught my strains
 From Nature's freshest veins.

.

Higher!
 Higher!
 I aspire
 To freedom's fullest note;
 The vigor of waxing birdhood thrills my throat;
 Morn's wide horizon, rimmed with fervid fire,
 Broadens my hope
 And sets far limitations to the scope
 Of my desire!
 Cage me not!
 Enrage me not!
 Confine me to no purpled garden-plot:
 My song must grow, as grows the plant or tree,
 Out of the sun, and earth, and winds of liberty!

Upon no vast
 Dead past
 I turn my eyes;
 But every budding moment's blossom I forecast

And take each day's new melodies by surprise.

I leap to meet fresh weather,

And feel through every feather

The first delicious foretaste of a change ;

I test the range

Of Nature's every franchise, every tether !

Dream on, O nightingale !

Old things shall fade and fail,

And glory of the past shall not avail

Against the Future, all-encompassing,

Whose prophet and whose poet I would be,

Whose promise and whose meaning I shall see,

Whose fires shall flame in every note I sing !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE MOCKING-BIRD

(AT NIGHT)

A golden pallor of voluptuous light

Filled the warm southern night :

The moon, clear-orbed, above the sylvan scene

Moved like a stately queen,

So rife with conscious beauty all the while,

What could she do but smile

At her own perfect loveliness below,

Glassed in the tranquil flow

Of crystal fountains and unruffled streams?

Half lost in waking dreams,

As down the loneliest forest dell I strayed,

Lo ! from a neighboring glade,

Flashed through the drifts of moonshine, swiftly came
A fairy shape of flame.
It rose in dazzling spirals overhead,
Whence to wild sweetness wed,
Poured marvellous melodies, silvery trill on trill ;
The very leaves grew still
On the charmed trees to hearken ; while for me
Heart-trilled to ecstasy,
I followed — followed the bright shape that flew,
Still circling up the blue,
Till as a fountain that has reached its height,
Falls back in sprays of light,
Slowly dissolved, so that enrapturing lay,
Divinely melts away
Through tremulous spaces to a music mist,
Soon by the fitful breeze
How gently kissed
Into remote and tender silences.

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

MOCKING-BIRD

Once, Paumanok,
When the snows had melted — when the lilac-scent was
in the air, and the Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore, in some briers,
Two guests from Alabama, — two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs, spotted with
brown,
And every day the he-bird, to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird, crouch'd on her nest, silent,
with bright eyes,

And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never
disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

“ Shine ! shine ! shine !
Pour down your warmth, great sun !
While we bask — we two together.

“ Two together !
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.”

Till, of a sudden,
Maybe kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward, all summer, in the sound of the sea,
And at night, under the full of the moon, in calmer
weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one, the he-
bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

“ Blow ! blow ! blow !
Blow up, sea-winds, along Paumanok’s shore !
I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me.”

Yes, when the stars glisten’d
All night long, on the prong of a moss-scallop’d stake,
Down, almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer, wonderful, causing tears.

He call’d on his mate ;
He pour’d forth the meanings which I, of all men, know.

Yes, my brother, I know ;
The rest might not, — but I have treasur’d every note ;
For once, and more than once, dimly, down to the beach
gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with
the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds
and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen’d long and long.

Listen’d, to keep, to sing, — now translating the
notes,
Following you, my brother.

“ Soothe ! soothe ! soothe !
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,

And again another behind, embracing and lapping,
every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

“ Low hangs the moon — it rose late ;
Oh, it is lagging ! — Oh, I think it is heavy with love,
with love !

“ O madly the sea pushes, pushes upon the land,
With love, — with love.

“ O night ! do I not see my love fluttering out there
among the breakers ?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white ?

“ Loud ! loud ! loud !
Loud I call to you, my love !
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves ;
Surely you must know who is here, is here ;
You must know who I am, my love.

“ Low-hanging moon !
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow ?
Oh, it is the shape, the shape of my mate !
O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.

“ Land ! land ! land !
Whichever way I turn, oh, I think you could give me my
mate back again, if you only would ;
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I
look.

“O rising stars !

Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with
some of you.

“O throat ! O trembling throat !

Sound clearer through the atmosphere !

Pierce the woods, the earth ;

Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

“Shake out, carols !

Solitary here, the night's carols !

Carols of lonesome love ! Death's carols !

Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !

Oh, under that moon, where she droops almost down into
the sea !

O reckless, despairing carols !

“But soft ! sink low ;

Soft ! let me just murmur ;

And do you wait a moment, you husky-noised sea ;

For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding
to me,

So faint — I must be still, be still to listen ;

But not altogether still, for then she might not come im-
mediately to me.

“Hither, my love !

Here I am ! Here !

With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you ;

This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.

“Do not be decoy’d elsewhere !
That is the whistle of the wind — it is not my voice ;
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray ;
Those are the shadows of leaves.

“O darkness ! O in vain !
Oh, I am very sick and sorrowful !

“O brown halo in the sky, near the moon, drooping
upon the sea !
O troubled reflection in the sea !
O throat ! O throbbing heart !
O all — and I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

“Yet I murmur, murmur on !
O murmurs — you yourselves make me continue to sing,
I know not why.

“O past ! O life ! O songs of joy !
In the air — in the woods — over fields ;
Loved ! loved ! loved ! loved ! loved !
But my love no more, no more with me !
We two together no more.”

Out of the Cradle endlessly Rocking. — WALT WHITMAN.

THE MEADOW-LARK

A patch of sunrise streaked with mist,
True child of morn ;
A sweet, spring day the meadow kissed,
And thou wast born.

A while we watch thy movement shy,
Without a nest ;
Dost make the rafters of the sky
By night thy rest ?

Did some one stumble in his lore
Of dates unknown,
That thou art here so long before
The grass is grown ?

There is no insect on the wing,
The ground is bare ;
Yet thou, methinks to hear thee sing,
With queens dost fare.

Not till the grass begins to wave
Art thou thy best ;
When such thy sunny ways, I crave
Thy yellow breast.

Then with the dew upon thy throat,
Thy notes impearled ;
Thou droppest them afar, afloat,
Down on the world.

A secret doth to thee belong,
Canst make reply?
Thy home is on the ground, and song
Is in the sky.

Thus to my earnest questioning,
The meadow-lark
This tonic note to me did fling,
How like a spark !

The high-winged spirits care-free are,
Of lowly heart ;
Their every thought, thus fledged a star,
A gem of art.

IRA BILLMAN.

THE MEADOW-LARK

A brave little bird that fears not God,
A voice that breaks from the snow-wet clod
With prophecy of sunny sod,
Set thick with wind-waved golden-rod.

From the first bare clod in the raw, cold spring,
From the last bare clod, when fall winds sting,
The farm-boy hears his brave song ring,
And work for the time is a pleasant thing.

HAMLIN GARLAND.

By permission of the author.

THE WAY THOU SINGEST

Ah, I have heard a meadow-lark
Sing o'er the growing corn
In notes of passion and desire,
At early primrose morn —
So full and rich and sweet,
My heart with rapture beat,
And for remembered years
Up sprang the tears . . .
And here — and now —
So singest thou !

When the Birds Go North. — MRS. ELLA HIGGINSON.

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TO THE MEADOW-LARK

(*ALAUDA MAGNA*)

Minstrel of melody,
How shall I chaunt of thee,
Floating in meadows athrill with thy song?
Fluting anear my feet,
Plaintive, and wildly sweet, —
O could thy spirit to mortal belong !
Tell me thy secret art,
How thou dost touch the heart,
Hinting of happiness still unpossessed?
Say, doth thy bosom burn
Vainly, as mine, and yearn
Sadly for something that leaves it unblessed?

Doth not that tender tone,
Over the clover blown,
Flow from a sorrow — a longing in vain?
Or is it joy intense,
So like a pang, the sense
Hears in thy sweetest song something of pain?
Others may cleave the steeps,
Soar, and in upper deeps
Sing in the heaven's blue arches profound;
But thou most lowly thing,
Teach me to keep my wing
Close to the breast of our Mother, the ground !

Soon shall my fleeting lay
Fade from the world away, —
Thine, ever-during, shall thrill thro' the years;
Love, who once gladdened me,
Surely hath saddened thee, —
Half of thy music is made of his tears.
Long may I list thy note
Soft thro' the summer float
Far o'er the fields where the wild grasses wave;
Then when my life is done,
Oh, at the set of sun,
Pour out thy spirit anear to my grave !

LLOYD MIFFLIN.

NORWOOD, June, 1899.

TO A LARK

Sweet bird, whose warblings wild my ear delight,
Whose shrill-ton'd melody I love to hear,
If thou didst know that murd'rous man was near,
How quickly wouldst thou shun his dang'rous sight !
But needless, beauteous bird, would be thy flight ;
'Tis true I wounded once a lark like thee ;
Perchance the harmless captive was thy mate.
To pine awhile in durance was his fate,
But soon I set the little suff'rer free ;
And nevermore will I thy race molest ;
Then plume thy dappled pinions, reckless rear
Thy taper neck, and show thy golden breast.
I prize my freedom, nor is thine less dear.
Then fearless rove and sing in native freedom blest.

SAMUEL LOW.

TO A MIGRATING SEA-BIRD.

As now thy solitary flight
I faintly trace on high,
— A speck, a mist that melts in light,
Upon the sunset sky —
Seen from that lone and dizzy height,
The dwindled forest to thy sight
Shows like a shrub ; the glen,
Like one of all its many flowers ;
Cities, like molehills ; peaks, like towers ;
And sure, like emmets, men.

High, higher still, till the gone sun
 Gleams on thy passing wing ;
As now the shadows, deeply dun,
 Come down, I see thee spring :
But thou the point hast reached, at last,
Whence the sure path, by instinct traced,
 Thou clearly canst espy,
To stream or lake, or reedy shore,
Where haply thou hast built before,
 And heard thy ducklings cry.

There choose thy mate and nurse thy brood ;
 Nor hawk nor man molest
Thy quiet haunt, till, on some eve
 Like this, they quit their nest :
By savage Cola's bleak recess,
That to the hunter bars ingress,
 And suns of sultry beam ;
Or, where the water-lily sleeps,
Rustles the reed, the alder weeps,
 By Lena's lakes and streams.

Lone bird ! a happy lot hast thou —
An empire kings might envy — now
 Pitching thy reedy tent
By summer cove or lake ; now high,
In company with Liberty,
 A wingèd emigrant.

A free, blithe wanderer of air,
Of joy or grief thou tak'st no care,
Save of the passing one ;
The future, past, alike unspied,
All memory would vainly hide,
And fear as vainly shun.

The graves, beneath thy roving wing,
Of former mate or nurseling, bring
No tear into thine eye ;
But thy affections still, though they
Their objects win, unwept decay,
And unregretted die.

GEORGE HILL.

TO A SEA-BIRD

Sauntering hither on listless wings,
Careless vagabond of the sea,
Little thou heedest the surf that sings,
The bar that thunders, the shale that rings, —
Give me to keep thy company.

Little thou hast, old friend, that's new,
Storms and wrecks are old things to thee ;
Sick am I of these changes, too ;
Little to care for, little to rue, —
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

All of thy wanderings, far and near,
Bring thee at last to shore and me ;
All of my journeyings end them here,
This our tether must be our cheer, —
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

Lazily rocking on ocean's breast,
Something in common, old friend, have we ;
Thou on the shingle seek'st thy nest,
I to the waters look for rest, —
I on the shore, and thou on the sea.

BRET HARTE.

THE SEA-BIRD

Sea-bird ! haunter of the wave,
Happy o'er its crest to hover ;
Half-engulph'd where yawns the cave
Billows form in rolling over.

Sea-bird ! seeker of the storm,
In its shriek thou dost rejoice ;
Sending from thy bosom warm,
Answer shriller than its voice.

Bird of nervous wing and bright,
Flashing silvery to the sun,
Sporting with the sea-foam white,
When will thy wild course be done ?

Whither tends it? has the shore
No alluring haunt for thee?
Nook with tangled vines run o'er,
Scented shrub, or leafy tree?

Is the purple seaweed rarer
Than the violet of spring?
Is the snowy foam-wreath fairer
Than the apple's blossoming?

Shady grove and sunny slope,
Seek but these, and thou shalt meet
Birds not born with storm to cope,
Hermits of retirement sweet.

Where no winds too rudely swell,
But, in whispers as they pass,
Of the fragrant flow'ret tell,
Hidden in the tender grass.

There the mock-bird sings of love ;
There the robin builds his nest ;
There the gentle-hearted dove,
Brooding, takes her blissful rest.

Sea-bird ! stay thy rapid flight : —
Gone ! — where dark waves foam and dash,
Like a lone star on the night
From afar his white wings flash !

He obeyeth God's behest :
Each and all some mission fill ;
Some the tempest born to breast,
Some to worship and be still.

If to struggle with the storm
On life's ever-changing sea,
Where cold mists enwrap the form,
My harsh destiny must be,

Sea-bird ! thus may I abide
Cheerful the allotment given ;
And above the ruffled tide
Soar at last, like thee, to Heaven !

ANNA MARIA WELLS.

TO A WATERFOWL

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast, —
The desert and illimitable air, —
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end ;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows ; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form ; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.

From Bryant's Poems,
by permission of D. Appleton & Co.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

MIGRANTS

Hello ! whom have we here,
Under the orange-trees,
Where the yellow convent wall
Looks to the turquoise seas ?

In his jacket of olive green
He slips from bough to bough,
With a familiar air
No venue could disavow.

Good-day to you, quiet sir !
We have been friends before,
When the lilacs were in bloom
By the lovely Scituate shore.

When the surly hordes of snow
Came down on the trains of the wind,
Two sojourners, it seems,
Were of a single mind.

Both from the storm and gray,
The stress of the northern year,
Seeking the peace of the world,
Found tranquillity here.

Here, where there is no haste,
Lead we, each in his way,
Undistracted a while,
The slow sweet life of a day.

Busy, contented, and shy,
Through the green shade you go ;
So unobtrusive and fair
A mien few mortals know.

It needs not the task be hard,
Nor the achievement sublime,
If only the soul be great,
Free from the fever of time.

And your glad being confirms
The ancient *Bonum est*
Nos hic esse of earth,
With serene unanxious zest,

Whether far North you fare,
When too brief spring once more
Visits the stone-walled fields
Beside the Scituate shore,

Or here in endless June,
Under the orange-trees,
Where the old convent wall
Looks to the turquoise seas.

BLISS CARMAN.

OUT OF THE SOUTH

A migrant song-bird I,
Out of the blue, between the sea and the sky,
Landward blown on bright, untiring wings ;
Out of the South I fly,
Urged by some vague, strange force of destiny,
To where the young wheat springs,
And the maize begins to grow,
And the clover fields to blow.

I have sought,
In far wild groves below the tropic line,
To lose old memories of this land of mine ;
I have fought
This vague, mysterious power that flings me forth
Into the North ;
But all in vain. When flutes of April blow
The immemorial longing lures me, and I go.

I go, I go,
The sky above, the sea below,
And I know not by what sense I keep my way,
Slow winnowing the ether night and day ;
Yet ever to the same green, fragrant maple grove,
Where I shall swing and sing beside my love,
Some irresistible impulse bears me on,
Through starry dusks and rosy mists of dawn,
And flames of noon and purple films of rain ;
And the strain
Of mighty winds hurled roaring back and forth,
Between the caverns of the reeling earth,

Cannot bewilder me.
I know that I shall see,
Just at the appointed time, the dogwood blow
And hear the willows rustle and the mill-stream flow.

The very bough that best
Shall hold a perfect nest
Now bursts its buds and spills its keen perfume ;
And the violets are in bloom,
Beside the boulder, lichen-grown and gray,
Where I shall perch and pipe,
Till the dewberries are ripe,
And our brood has flown away,
And the empty nest swings high
Between the flowing tides of grass and the dreamy violet
sky.

I come, I come !
Bloom, O cherry, peach, and plum !
Bubble brook, and rustle corn and rye !
Falter not, O Nature, nor will I.
Give me thy flower and fruit,
And I'll blow for thee my flute ;
I'll blow for thee my flute so sweet and clear,
This year,
Next year,
And many and many a blooming coming year,
Till this strange force
No more aloft shall guide me in my course,
High over weltering billows and dark woods
Over Mississippi's looped and tangled floods

Over the hills of Tennessee,
And old Kentucky's greenery,
In sun, in night, in clouds, and forth
Out of the South, into the North,
To the spot where first the ancestral nest was swung,
Where first the ancestral song was sung,
Whose shadowy strains still ravish me
With immemorial melody.

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE CARDINAL-BIRD

The Cardinal has come again ;
He all the brake salutes ;
His music floods the silent glen,
Oh, hear him, how he flutes !

From tree to tree his scarlet glows ;
Such beauty rare he brings,
That all the richness of the rose
Seems lavished on his wings !

LLOYD MIFFLIN.



MAY

*Hither the busy birds shall flutter,
With the light timber for their nests,
And, pausing from their labor, utter
The morning sunshine in their breasts.*

On Planting a Tree at Inveraray. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

*Swallows over the water,
Warblers over the land,
Silvery, tinkling ripples
Along the pebbly strand,
Afar in the upper ether
The eagle floats at rest;
No wind now frets the forest,
'Tis nature at her best.
The golden haze of autumn
Enwraps the bloom of May, —
Fate grant me many another
Such perfect summer day.*

CHARLES C. ABBOTT.

MAY-DAY

Why chidest thou the tardy spring?
The hardy bunting does not chide ;
The blackbirds make the maples ring
With social cheer and jubilee ;
The redwing flutes his *o-ka-lee*,
The robins know the melting snow ;
The sparrow meek, prophetic-eyed,
Her nest beside the snow-drift weaves ;
Secure the osier yet will hide
Her callow brood in mantling leaves ;
And thou, by science all undone,
Why only must thy reason fail
To see the southing of the sun ?

.
I know the trusty almanac
Of the punctual coming-back,
On their due days, of the birds.
I marked them yestermorn,
A flock of finches darting
Beneath the crystal arch,
Piping, as they flew, a march,
Belike the one they used in parting
Last year from yon oak or larch ;
Dusky sparrows in a crowd,
Diving, darting northward free,
Suddenly betook them all,
Every one to his hole in the wall,
Or to his niche in the apple-tree.
I greet with joy the choral trains
Fresh from the palms and Cuba's canes.

Best gems of Nature's cabinet,
With dews of tropic morning wet,
Beloved of children, bards, and spring
O birds, your perfect virtues bring,
Your song, your forms, your rhythmic flight,
Your manners for the heart's delight,
Nestle in hedge, or barn, or roof,
Here weave your chamber weather-proof,
Forgive our harms, and condescend
To man, as to a lubber friend,
And, generous, teach his awkward race
Courage and probity and grace !

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

NATURE'S INVITATION.

When soft May breezes fan the early woods,
And with her magic wand the blue-ey'd spring
Quickens the swelling blossoms and the buds,
Then forth the russet partridge leads her brood,
While on the fallen tree-trunk drums her mate ;
The quail her young in tangled thicket hides,
The dun deer with their fawns the forests range,
The wild-geese platoons hasten far in air ;
The wild-ducks from their southern lagoons pass,
And, soaring high, their northward journeyings take ;
The dusky coot along the coast-line sweep ;
The piping snipe and plover, that frequent
The sandy bars and beaches, wing their flight,
And all the grassy prairies of the West

Teem with the speckled younglings of the grouse ;
And all the budding forests and the streams
Are gay with beauty, joyous with young life.

Then swell the first bird melodies : the wren
Chirrup and perches on the garden rail ;
The bluebird twitters on the lilac hedge,
Or flits on azure wings from tree to tree ;
The golden robin on the apple bough
Hovers, where last year's withered nest had been ;
The darting swallows circle o'er the roof ;
The woodpeckers on trunk of gnarled trees
Tap their quick drum-beats with their horny beaks ;
The crow caws hoarsely from the blasted pine ;
High in mid-air the sailing hawk is pois'd,
While from the grove the purple pigeon-flocks
Burst with loud flapping o'er the grain-sown fields.

ISAAC MCLELLAN.

THE RUFFED GROUSE

When the pallid sun has vanished
Under Osceola's ledges,
When the lengthening shadows mingle
In a sombre sea of twilight,
From the hemlocks in the hollow
Swift emerging comes the partridge ;
Not a sound betrays her starting,
Not a sound betrays her lighting
In the birches by the wayside,
In her favored place for budding.

When the twilight turns to darkness,
When the fox's bark is sounding,
From her buds the partridge hastens,
Seeks the soft snow by the hazels,
Burrows in its sheltering masses,
Burrows where no owl can find her.

Ah, how welcome is the springtime !

.
Then it is the stately partridge
Spreads his ruff and mounts his rostrum,
Gazes proudly round the thicket,
Sounds his strange and muffled signal.
First with slow and heavy measure,
Then like eager, hurried heart-beats,
Ending in a nervous flutter
Faster than the ear can reckon.

Midway in the May-month season,
From her haughty, strutting master
To the silence of the pine wood
Steals the happy partridge mother,
Under cloak of yew and moosewood,
Under brush and in the shadow,
Seeks a hollow lined with mosses,
Filled with leaves and sweet pine needles ;
There her pale brown eggs she fondles,
There in anxious silence watches,
Stirs not, starts not, though dread danger
Passes near her, crashes by her.

Warm the leaves when chicks are hatching,
Full the ground of dainty morsels,
Broad the ferns to hide her darlings,
Keen her ear to tell of danger.

If perchance a man approaches,
Nears her brood and notes her presence,
Ah, how quickly does the mother
Risk herself to save her nestlings !
Whining, moaning, near him crouching,
Limping, fluttering, leading onward,
While the chicks, with matchless cunning
Craft inherited from ages,
Under leaves, beneath broad mushrooms,
Into stumps, or gaping ledges
Crowd their downy, frightened bodies,
Wait till danger long has vanished.

Then with reassuring mewing
Comes the mother back to call them,
Nestle one by one beneath her,
Soothe their fright and preen their plumage.

FRANK BOLLES.

RUFFED GROUSE ; PARTRIDGE

Where greenwood shadows shift and swim,
As in cathedral arches dim,
Casting a weird and solemn shade
Thro' the primeval forest-glade,
While here and there a sunny beam
Thro' canopy and vault doth stream,

Illuminating with its glow
The checker'd turf that spreads below, —
There the shy partridge loves to brood,
Deep in the shelter of the wood.

High soars a patriarchal oak,
Its umbrage scath'd by lightning-stroke,
Upon whose topmost bough doth dwell
An eagle, monarch of the dell,
O'erlooking from his eyrie grand
The wide expanse of forest land ;
Now rising high in air to sweep
In circling rings the upper deep,
Now pois'd and balanc'd in mid-space,
As resting from his airy chase ;
Now sweeping downward on its way
As pirate bark swoops on its prey.

Yonder a chestnut grove is seen
Waving its royal flags of green ;
A lovely spot, a cool retreat,
Where shade and silence love to meet,
But in the mellow autumn-time
(When brisk October breezes chime,
When fruits are ripe, and leaves are red),
Vocal with music, loud with tread,
For there the village children haste
The chestnuts, brown and crisp, to taste,
And there the partridge loves to bring
Her young when evening folds its wing.

In rocky regions, where the pine
And spruce and hemlock intertwine,
Forming an overhanging roof
Against the rain and sunbeam proof,

So dense that scarce a ray may pour
Across the dark and russet floor,
There doth the speckled partridge come
In dim recess to make a home,
To sound the drum or forth to lead
The young, on berries ripe to feed,
Prompt on affrighted wing to break
When foes the tangled thickets shake.

They love the lofty, breezy height,
The hillside with its sunshine bright,
The long, mountainous range of hills
Where bubble forth the crystal rills,
Where oak and laurel intertwine,
And shakes its plummy crest the pine ;
And there they love to lurk and feed
On fallen mast and dropping seed ;
And there the red luxurious fare
Of melting strawberries they share,
The partridge-berries' scarlet fruit,
The blueberry's o'erladen shoot,
And spicy bud and purple grape,
Where vines the sunny hillside drape.

When bleak November hoar-frosts creep
Along the mountain-ranges steep,
They speed before the rising gale
To seek some warm, sequester'd vale,
And there where stood the harvest sheaves
They feed at will in morn and eves,
Gleaning the grains so honey-sweet
Of oat and barley, and buckwheat,
Secure by day in tussocks green,
At night in sombre evergreen.

ISAAC MCLELLAN.

THE NEST¹

MAY

When oaken woods with buds are pink,
And new-come birds each morning sing ;
When fickle May on Summer's brink
Pauses, and knows not which to fling,
Whether fresh bud and bloom again,
Or hoar-frost silvering hill and plain,

Then from the honeysuckle gray
The oriole with experienced quest
Twitches the fibrous bark away,
The cordage of his hammock-nest,
Cheering his labor with a note
Rich as the orange of his throat.

High o'er the loud and dusty road
The soft gray cup in safety swings,
To brim ere August with its load
Of downy breasts and throbbing wings,
O'er which the friendly elm-tree heaves
An emerald roof with sculptured eaves.

Below, the noisy World drags by
In the old way, because it must,
The bride with heartbreak in her eye,
The mourner following hated dust :
Thy duty, winged flame of Spring,
Is but to love, and fly, and sing.

¹ Part second will be found in its appropriate month, December.

O happy life, to soar and sway
Above the life by mortals led,
Singing the merry months away,
Master, not slave of daily bread,
And, when the Autumn comes, to flee
Wherever sunshine beckons thee !

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

NATURE'S EASTER MUSIC

The flowers from the earth have arisen
They are singing their Easter-song ;
Up the valleys and over the hillsides
They come, an unnumbered throng.

Oh, listen ! The wild flowers are singing
Their beautiful songs without words !
They are pouring the soul of their music
Through the voices of happy birds.

Every flower to a bird has confided
The joy of its blossoming birth —
The wonders of its resurrection
From its grave in the frozen earth.

For you chirp the wren and the sparrow,
Little Eyebright, Anemone pale !
Gay Columbine, orioles are chanting
Your trumpet-note, loud on the gale.

The buttercup's thanks for the sunshine
The goldfinch's twitter reveals ;
And the violet trills, through the bluebird,
Of the heaven that within her she feels.

The song-sparrow's exquisite warble
Is born in the heart of the rose —
Of the wild-rose, shut in its calyx,
Afraid of belated snows.

And the melody of the wood-thrush
Floats up from the nameless and shy
White blossoms that stay in the cloister
Of pine-forests, dim and high.

The dust of the roadside is vocal ;
There is music from every clod ;
Bird and breeze are the wild-flowers' angels,
Their messages bearing to God.

"We arise and we praise Him together !"
With a flutter of petals and wings,
The anthem of spirits immortal
Rings back from created things.

And nothing is left wholly speechless ;
For the dumbest life that we know
May utter itself through another,
And double its gladness so.

LUCY LARCOM.

SPRING'S TORCH-BEARER

Oriole — athlete of the air —

Of fire and song a glowing core,
From tropic wildernesses fair,
Spring's favorite lampadephore,

A hot flambeau on either wing
Ripples as you pass me by ;
'Tis seeing flame to hear you sing,
'Tis hearing song to see you fly.

Below the leaves in fragrant gloom,
Cool currents lead you to your goal,
Where bursting jugs of rich perfume
Down honeyed slopes of verdure roll.

In eddies, round some hummock cold,
Where violets weave their azure bredes,
You flash a torch o'er rimy mould,
And rouse the dormant balsam seeds.

Upon the sassafras a flare,
And through the elm a wavering sheen,
A flicker in the orchard fair,
A flame across the hedgerow green.

Your voice and light are in my dream
Of vanished youth, they warm my heart ;
With every chirrup, every gleam,
Sweet currents from old fountains start.

I take me wings and fly with you,
Once more the boy of long ago,
O days of bloom ! O honey-dew !
Hark ! how the flutes of fairy blow !

You whisk wild splendors through the trees
And send keen fervors down the wind,
You singe the jackets of the bees,
And trail an opal mist behind.

When flowery hints foresay the berry,
On spray of haw and tuft of brier,
Then, wandering incendiary,
You set the maple swamps afire !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE ORIOLE

A flash of light and a whirl of wings,
A gleam of gold and a blush of red,
And adown the gloom like a star it sped ;
Adown the green and the trees atween,
Like a feathery fire it swiftly fled,
With an ebon back, and a golden throat,
And a palpitant, pulsatile, passionate note,
That out on the air like a bubble doth float
Or a golden girl in a golden boat.

A gorgeous creature, a globe of fire,
A thing all splendor and love and light ;
A robin begot in the rainbow bright
Or the western skies when the sunset dyes
The wings of the birds that pass in flight
Through the ruby gates, and the portals wide,
Till tipped with vermilion, and dipped in a tide
Of purple and gold, they glimmer and glide
Through the sky, as bright as a bloomy bride.

An orange-musk in the twinkling dusk ;
A topaz throbbing with golden fire ;
Sweet music shaken from Heaven's lyre,
And turned in the night to crimson bright,
And gold like the yellow light of a pyre, —
A glimmering, shimmering, beautiful thing,
With a voice like a pearl in a simmering spring,
A diamond flitting on glittering wing,
That ever of Heaven doth heavenly sing.

THE ORIOLE

Like a live flame wind-wafted from altars celestial
Floats the blithe oriole through the bright air ;
Dropping down as half won by spring's glories terrestrial.
Buoyantly upward swift fleeting to fare.
Like the light on a fount's rippling bosom that glances
With the wavering pulse of its rhythmical flow,
Now he rises, now falls ; or, as leaf blast-tossed dances,
In whimsical mazes he sweeps to and fro.

In the meadows beneath him the buttercups' chalices
Gleam, beaten gold, in the glowing June sun ;
The red clovers are fragrant as spikenard of palaces,
Blue blooms the iris where topaz brooks run ;
But oh, what so sweet, what so fair as his singing !
What so lucent, so mellow ! Oh, oriole dear,
Thy notes down the mist-muffled Stygian meads ringing
Even shadowless ghosts, hope-abandoned, might cheer.

How the fervor of being, the zest of life glorious,
Seethes in the lay like the spirit in wine
As it foams in the cup of some hero victorious,
Triumphing splendid at banquets divine.
With what gurgling delight is his song brimming over !
With what infinite glee, like the laughter of Pan !
As the sunshine of June, the perfume of the clover,
The caress of the west wind commingled and ran.

How he sings with his flight, till the song-tide out-bubbling

Hardly less motion than melody seems ;

In ecstasy ever his passion redoubling,

Flinging his notes as the sun flings its beams ;

Like the amber of honey from fragrant combs dripping

Where the bees of Hymettus have made them brim
o'er,

Like the shower of gold 'round the polished limbs slipping,

When the god unto Danaë descended of yore.

Jocund bird, might I join in the joy that thou utterest,

Dear would life be, as it once was of old ;

As of old might my heart leap as light as thou flutterest,

Clovers be censers and buttercups gold.

Like the day when love comes is the oriole's singing,

When from fulness of bliss all the fond bosom aches ;

Oh, sweet oriole, sing ! Drown the death-bell's dread
ringing,

For when love hears that clang, then the lonely heart
breaks.

ARLO BATES.

THE BALTIMORE BIRD

High on yon poplar, clad in glossiest green,

The orange, black-capped Baltimore is seen ;

The broad extended boughs still please him best ;

Beneath their bending skirts he hangs his nest ;

There his sweet mate, secure from every harm,

Broods o'er her spotted store, and wraps them warm, —

Lists to the noon-tide hum of busy bees,
Her partner's mellow song, the brook, the breeze ;
These day by day the lonely hours deceive,
From dewy morn to slow descending eve.
Two weeks elaps'd, behold ! a helpless crew
Claim all her care, and her affection too ;
On wings of love th' assiduous nurses fly,
Flowers, leaves, and boughs, abundant food supply ;
Glad chants their guardian, as abroad he goes,
And waving breezes rock them to repose.

ALEXANDER WILSON.

THE ORIOLE

Hush ! 'tis he !

My oriole, my glance of summer fire,
Is come at last, and, ever on the watch,
Twitches the pack-thread I had lightly wound
Around the bough to help his housekeeping, —
Twitches and scouts by turns, blessing his luck,
Yet fearing me who laid it in his way,
Nor, more than wiser we in our affairs,
Divines the Providence that hides and helps.

Heave ho ! Heave ho ! he whistles as the twine
Slackens its hold ; *Once more now !* and a flash
Lightens across the sunlight to the elm
Where his mate dangles at her cup of felt.
Nor all his booty is the thread ; he trails
My loosened thought with it along the air,
And I must follow, would I ever find
The inward rhyme to all this wealth of life.

Under the Willows. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE BALTIMORE ORIOLE

O golden robin ! pipe again
That happy, hopeful, cheering strain !

A prisoner in my chamber, I
See neither grass, nor bough, nor sky ;
Yet to my mind thy warblings bring,
In troops, all images of Spring ;
And every sense is satisfied
By what thy magic has supplied.
As by enchantment, now I see,
On every bush and forest-tree,
The tender, downy leaf appear,—
The loveliest robe they wear.

The tulip and the hyacinth grace
The garden bed ; each grassy place,
With dandelions glowing bright,
Or king-cups, childhood's pure delight,
Invite the passer-by to tread
Upon the soft, elastic bed,
And pluck again the simple flowers
Which charmed so oft his younger hours.
The apple orchards all in bloom,—
I seem to smell their rare perfume.
And thou, gay whistler ! to whose song
These powers of magic art belong,
On top of lofty elm I see
Thy black and orange livery —
Forgive that word ! A freeman bold,
Of choice thou wearest jet and gold,

And no man's livery dost bear,
Thou flying tulip ! free as air !

Come, golden robin ! once again
That magic, joy-inspiring strain !

THOMAS HILL.

THE SONG THE ORIOLE SINGS

There is a bird that comes and sings
In the Professor's garden-trees ;
Upon the English oak he swings,
And tilts and tosses in the breeze.

I know his name, I know his note,
That so with rapture takes my soul ;
Like flame the gold beneath his throat,
His glossy cope is black as coal.

O oriole, it is the song
You sang me from the cottonwood,
Too young to feel that I was young,
Too glad to guess if life were good.

And while I hark, before my door,
Adown the dusty Concord road,
The blue Miami flows once more
As by the cottonwood it flowed.

And on the bank that rises steep,
And pours a thousand tiny rills,
From death and absence laugh and leap
My school-mates to their flutter-mills.

The blackbirds jangle in the tops
Of hoary-antlered sycamores ;
And timorous killdee starts and stops
Among the driftwood on the shores.

Below, the bridge — a noonday fear
Of dust and shadow shot with sun —
Stretches its gloom from pier to pier,
Far unto alien coasts unknown.

And on those alien coasts, above,
Where silver ripples break the stream's
Long blue, from some roof-sheltering grove
A hidden parrot scolds and screams.

Ah, nothing, nothing ! Commonest things :
A touch, a glimpse, a sound, a breath —
It is a song the oriole sings —
And all the rest belongs to death.

But oriole, my oriole,
Were some bright seraph sent from bliss
With songs of heaven to win my soul
From simple memories such as this,

What could he tell to tempt my ear
From you? What high thing could there be
So tenderly and sweetly dear
As my lost boyhood is to me?

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS.

THE NIGHT-HAWK

When frogs make merry the pools of May,
And sweet, oh, sweet,
Through the twilight dim
Is the vesper hymn
Their myriad mellow pipes repeat
As the rose-dusk dies away,
Then hark, the night-hawk !
(For now is the elfin hour.)
With melting skies o'er him,
All summer before him,
His wild brown mate to adore him,
By the spell of his power
He summons the apples in flower.

In the high, pale heaven he flits and calls ;
Then swift, oh, swift,
On sounding wing
That hums like a string,
To the quiet glades where the gnat-clouds drift
And the night-moths flicker, he falls.
Then hark, the night-hawk !
(For now is the elfin hour.)
With melting skies o'er him,
All summer before him,
His wild brown mate to adore him,
By the spell of his power
He summons the apples in flower.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

WOOD-DUCK

In May-time, when the lilac-plumes
Droop from the branch their purple blooms ;
When chestnuts clap their leafy hands,
And every bud with joy expands ;
When in the moist, sequester'd nooks
Of woods is heard the call of brooks,
The wood-duck builds its downy nest
Secure from prowling schoolboy's quest.

The swampy, shallow creeks they haunt,
Where thick woods o'er the waters slant,
Whose interlacing branches make
A dusky evening in the brake ;
And there their little nests are made
In hollow mossy log decay'd,
Or where the woodpecker had bored
The crumbling bark to hide his hoard,
Fast by the stream whose ripples beat
The tree-roots of their close retreat.

Most beauteous of all the race
That skim the wave or soar in space,
With plumage fairer than the rays
The bird-of-paradise displays,
A mottled purple gloss'd with green,
All colors in the rainbow seen ;
No tropic bird of Indian skies
May rival thy imperial dyes.

Least wary of all fowl that wing
O'er salty bay or inland spring,

They haunt the pond whose reedy shore
Extendeth by the farmer's door,
Or rivulet whose waters trill
Their melodies below the mill ;
And here the ambush'd gunner lies
To gather in his lovely prize.

ISAAC MCLELLAN.

THE OVEN-BIRD

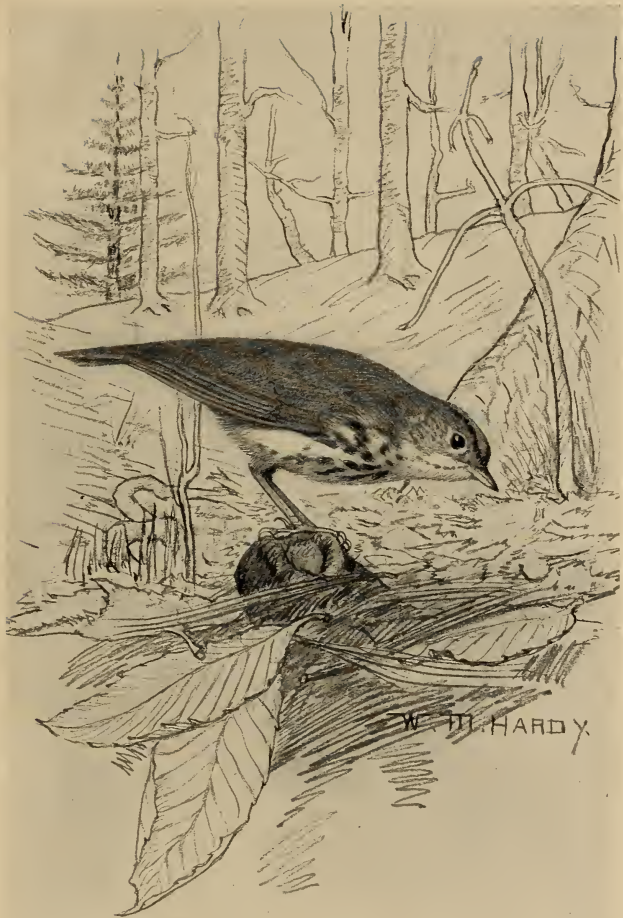
In the days of spring migrations,
Days when warbler hosts move northward,
To the forests, to the leaf beds,
Comes the tiny oven builder.

Daintily the leaves he tiptoes ;
Underneath them builds his oven,
Arched and framed with last year's oak-leaves,
Roofed and walled against the raindrops.

Hour by hour his voice he raises,
Mingling with the red-eye's snatches,
Answering to the hermit's anthem ;
Rising, falling, like a wind breath.

Strange, ventriloquous his music,
Far away when close beside one ;
Near at hand when seeming distant ;
Weird, his plaintive accrescendo.

FRANK BOLLES.



OVEN-BIRD

THE PEWEE

The listening Dryads hushed the woods ;
The boughs were thick, and thin and few
The golden ribbons fluttering through ;
Their sun-embroidered, leafy hoods
The lindens lifted to the blue ;
Only a little forest-brook
The farthest hem of silence shook,
When in the hollow shades I heard, —
Was it a spirit, or a bird ?
Or, strayed from Eden, desolate,
Some Peri calling to her mate,
Whom nevermore her mate would cheer ?
“ Pe-ri ! pe-ri ! peer ! ”

Through rocky clefts the brooklet fell
With plashy pour, that scarce was sound,
But only quiet less profound,
A stillness fresh and audible ;
A yellow leaflet to the ground
Whirled noiselessly ; with wing of gloss
A hovering sunbeam brushed the moss,
And wavering brightly over it,
Sat like a butterfly alit ;
The owlet in his open door
Stared roundly ; while the breezes bore
The plaint to far-off places drear,
“ Pe-ree ! pe-ree ! peer ! ”

To trace it in its green retreat
I sought among the boughs in vain,
And followed still the wandering strain,
So melancholy and so sweet
The dim-eyed violets yearned with pain.
'Twas now a sorrow in the air,
Some nymph's immortalized despair
Haunting the woods and waterfalls ;
And now, at long, sad intervals,
Sitting unseen in dusky shade,
His plaintive pipe some fairy played,
With long-drawn cadence thin and clear,
" Pe-wee ! pe-wee ! peer ! "

Long-drawn and clear its closes were, —
As if the hand of Music through
The sombre robe of Silence drew
A thread of golden gossamer ;
So pure a flute the fairy blew.
Like beggared princes of the wood,
In silver rags the birches stood ;
The hemlocks, lordly counsellors,
Were dumb ; the sturdy servitors,
In beechen jackets patched and gray,
Seemed waiting spellbound all the day
That low, entrancing note to hear, —
" Pe-wee ! pe-wee ! peer ! "

I quit the search, and sat me down
Beside the brook, irresolute,
And watched a little bird in suit
Of sober olive, soft and brown,
Perched in the maple-branches, mute :
With greenish gold its vest was fringed,
Its tiny cap was ebon-tinged,
With ivory pale its wings were barred,
And its dark eyes were tender-starred.
“ Dear bird,” I said, “ what is thy name ? ”
And thrice the mournful answer came,
So faint and far, and yet so near, —
“ Pe-wee ! pe-wee ! peer ! ”

For so I found my forest bird, —
The pewee of the loneliest woods,
Sole singer in these solitudes,
Which never robin’s whistle stirred,
Where never bluebird’s plumé intrudes.
Quick darting through the dewy morn,
The redstart trilled his twittering horn,
And vanished in thick boughs ; at even,
Like liquid pearls fresh showered from heaven,
The high notes of the lone wood-thrush
Fall on the forest’s holy hush :
But thou all day complainest here, —
“ Pe-wee ! pe-wee ! peer ! ”

Hast thou, too, in thy little breast,
Strange longings for a happier lot, —
For love, for life, thou know'st not what, —
A yearning, and a vague unrest,
For something still which thou hast not?
Thou soul of some benighted child
That perished, crying in the wild !
Or lost, forlorn, and wandering maid,
By love allured, by love betrayed,
Whose spirit with her latest sigh
Arose, a little wingèd cry,
Above her chill and mossy bier !
“ Dear me ! dear me ! dear ! ”

Ah, no such piercing sorrow mars
The pewee's life of cheerful ease !
He sings, or leaves his song to seize
An insect sporting in the bars
Of mild bright light that gild the trees.
A very poet he ! For him
All pleasant places still and dim ;
His heart, a spark of heavenly fire,
Burns with undying, sweet desire ;
And so he sings ; and so his song,
Though heard not by the hurrying throng,
Is solace to the pensive ear :
“ Pewee ! pewee ! peer ! ”

THE GREAT CRESTED FLY-CATCHER

Late in May he makes his nesting,
Seeks a deep and darksome hollow
In the orchard's oldest tree-trunk ;
Lines it well with matted cow's hair,
Grasses, feathers, bits of wasps' nests,
Slender roots, or silky fibres,
Here and there a scrap of paper,
Shred of bark, or seed of thistle.

Odder things than these he uses, —
Things for something else than comfort ;
Sometimes to the general tangle
He will add a tail of chipmunk,
Sometimes fish scales, iridescent,
Mingle in the mystic chaos,
But his chiefly favored fetich
Is a piece of cast-off snake skin.

In this ill-assorted rubbish
Four or five strange eggs are hidden ;
They are tinted like the matted
Leaves and grasses, hair and feathers ;
From their larger end descending
Countless slender rays or streakings
Seek the point, while in beginning
They are blended in a tangle.

What can be the explanation
Of this bird's persistent fancy?
Why through countless generations
Have they sought for cast-off snake skins
To adorn or guard their nestings
In the hollow of the tree-trunks?
Do the mouse, the snake, and squirrel
Fear a scrap of harmless snake skin?

Wild and wary is this tyrant,
Harsh his screaming, angry whistle,
Strange his comings and his goings,
Strange his likings and his hatings;
Round about Chocorua water
He has found the haunts he fancies,
But in many another valley
None have ever heard his clamor.

He is one that shuns the winter
Knows no home where snowflakes flutter.
Insect wings proclaim his coming,
Insect death foretells his going,
With the arbutus he enters,
With the goldenrod he passes,
Hither from the south in Maytime,
Thither with the equinoctial.

FRANK BOLLES.

THE MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT

While May bedecks the naked trees
With tassels and embroideries,
And many blue-eyed violets beam
Along the edges of the stream,
I hear a voice that seems to say,
Now near at hand, now far away,
 "Witchery — witchery — witchery !"

An incantation so serene,
So innocent, befits the scene :
There's magic in that small bird's note —
See, there he flits — the Yellow-throat ;
A living sunbeam, tipped with wings,
A spark of light that shines and sings,
 "Witchery — witchery — witchery !"

You prophet with a pleasant name,
If out of Mary-land you came,
You know the way that thither goes
Where Mary's lovely garden grows :
Fly swiftly back to her, I pray,
And try to call her down this way,
 "Witchery — witchery — witchery !"

Tell her to leave her cockle-shells,
And all her little silver bells
That blossom into melody,
And all her maids less fair than she.
She does not need these pretty things,
For everywhere she comes, she brings
 "Witchery — witchery — witchery !"

The woods are greening overhead,
And flowers adorn each mossy bed ;
The waters babble as they run —
One thing is lacking, only one :
If Mary were but here to-day,
I would believe your charming lay,
 “ *Witchery — witchery — witchery !* ”

Along the shady road I look —
Who's coming now across the brook ?
A woodland maid, all robed in white —
The leaves dance round her with delight,
The stream laughs out beneath her feet —
Sing, merry bird, the charm's complete,
 “ *Witchery — witchery — witchery !* ”

HENRY VAN DYKE.

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THE NOTES OF THE BIRDS

Well do I love those various harmonies
That ring so gayly in Spring's budding woods,
And in the thickets, and green, quiet haunts,
And lonely copses of the Summer-time,
And in red Autumn's ancient solitudes.

If thou art pained with the World's noisy stir,
Or crazed with its mad tumults, and weighed down
With any of the ills of human life ;
If thou art sick and weak, or mournest at the loss
Of brethren gone to that far-distant land
To which we all do pass, gentle and poor,
The gayest and the gravest, all alike, —
Then turn into the peaceful woods, and hear
The thrilling music of the forest birds.

How rich the varied choir ! The unquiet finch
Calls from the distant hollows, and the wren
Uttereth her sweet and mellow plaint at times,
And the thrush mourneth where the kalmia hangs
Its crimson-spotted cups, or chirps half hid
Amid the lowly dog-wood's snowy flowers,
And the blue jay flits by, from tree to tree,
And, spreading its rich pinions, fills the ear
With its shrill-sounding and unsteady cry.

With the sweet airs of Spring the robin comes ;
And in her simple song there seems to gush
A strain of sorrow when she visiteth
Her last year's withered nest. But when the gloom
Of the deep twilight falls, she takes her perch
Upon the red-stemmed hazel's slender twig
That overhangs the brook, and suits her song
To the slow rivulet's inconstant chime.

In the last days of Autumn, when the corn
Lies sweet and yellow in the harvest field
And the gay company of reapers bind
The bearded wheat in sheaves ; then peals abroad
The blackbird's merry chant. I love to hear,
Bold plunderer ! thy mellow burst of song
Float from thy watch-place on the mossy tree
Close at the corn-field edge.

Lone whip-poor-will !

There is much sweetness in thy fitful hymn,
Heard in the drowsy watches of the night.
Ofttimes, when all the village lights are out,
And the wide air is still, I hear thee chant
Thy hollow dirge, like some recluse who takes
His lodging in the wilderness of woods,
And lifts his anthem when the world is still :
And the dim, solemn night, that brings to man
And to the herds, deep slumbers, and sweet dews
To the red roses and the herbs, doth find
No eye, save thine, a watcher in her halls.
I hear thee oft at midnight, when the thrush
And the green, roving linnet are at rest,
And the blithe, twittering swallows have long ceased
Their noisy note, and folded up their wings.

Far up some brook's still course, whose current mines
The forest's blackened roots, and whose green marge
Is seldom visited by human foot,
The lonely heron sits, and harshly breaks

The Sabbath silence of the Wilderness ;
And you may find her by some reedy pool,
Or brooding gloomily on the time-stained rock
Beside some misty and far-reaching lake.

Most awful is thy deep and heavy boom,
Gray watcher of the waters ! thou art king
Of the blue lake ; and all the winged kind
Do fear the echo of thine angry cry.
How bright thy savage eye ! Thou lookest down
And seest the shining fishes as they glide ;
And, poising thy gray wing, thy glossy beak
Swift as an arrow strikes its roving prey.
Ofttimes I see thee, through the curling mist,
Dart, like a Spectre of the night, and hear
Thy strange, bewildering call, like the wild scream
Of one whose life is perishing in the sea.

And now, wouldst thou, O man ! delight the ear
With earth's delicious sounds, or charm the eye
With beautiful creations ? Then pass forth
And find them midst those many-colored birds
That fill the glowing woods. The richest hues
Lie in their splendid plumage, and their tones
Are sweeter than the music of the lute,
Or the harp's melody, or the notes that gush
So thrillingly from beauty's ruby lip.

ISAAC McLELLAN.

THE HERALD CRANE

Ah ! say you so, bold sailor
In the sun-lit deeps of sky !
Dost thou so soon the seed-time tell
In thy imperial cry,
As circling in yon shoreless sea
Thine unseen form goes drifting by ?

I cannot trace in the noon-day glare
Thy regal flight, O crane !
From the leaping might of the fiery light
Mine eyes recoil in pain,
But on mine ear, thine echoing cry
Falls like a bugle strain.

The mellow soil glows beneath my feet,
Where lies the buried grain ;
The warm light floods the length and breadth
Of the vast, dim, shimmering plain,
Throbbing with heat and the nameless thrill
Of the birth-time's restless pain.

On weary wing, plebeian geese
Push on their arrowy line
Straight into the north, or snowy brant
In dazzling sunshine, gloom and shine ;
But thou, O crane, save for thy sovereign cry,
At thy majestic height,
On proud, extended wings sweep'st on
In lonely, easeful flight.

Then cry, thou martial-throated herald !
Cry to the sun, and sweep
And swing along thy mateless, tireless course
Above the clouds that sleep
Afloat on lazy air — cry on ! Send down
Thy trumpet note — it seems
The voice of hope and dauntless will,
And breaks the spell of dreams.

HAMLIN GARLAND.

THE BLUE HERON

Where water-grass grows overgreen
On damp, cool flats by gentle streams,
Still as a ghost and sad of mien,
With half-closed eyes the heron dreams.

Above him in the sycamore
The flicker beats a dull tattoo ;
Through pawpaw groves the soft airs pour
Gold dust of blooms and fragrance new.

And from the thorn it loves so well,
The oriole flings out its strong,
Sharp lay, wrought in the crucible
Of its flame-circled soul of song.

The heron nods. The charming runes
Of Nature's music thrill his dreams ;
The joys of many Mays and Junes
Wash past him like cool summer streams.

What tranquil life, what joyful rest,
To feel the touch of fragrant grass,
And doze like him, while tenderest
Dream-waves across my sleep would pass !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE KINGFISHER

He laughs by the summer stream
Where the lilies nod and dream,
As through the sheen of water cool and clear
He sees the chub and sunfish cutting sheer.

His are resplendent eyes ;
His mien is kingliwise ;
And down the May wind rides he like a king,
With more than royal purple on his wing.

His palace is the brake
Where the rushes shine and shake ;
His music is the murmur of the stream,
And that leaf-rustle where the lilies dream.

Such life as his would be
A more than heaven to me :
All sun, all bloom, all happy weather,
All joys bound in a sheaf together.

No wonder he laughs so loud !
No wonder he looks so proud !
There are great kings would give their royalty
To have one day of his felicity !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE KINGFISHER

Hark ! What sound disturbs the stillness
Of the forest, of the meadow ?
Harsh the notes, a wild alarum,
Waking echoes from the ledges,
Mocking laughter from the hemlocks.
Hark ! It nearer comes and rattles,
Like the hail upon the grape leaves,
Like cold rain upon the cornfield.

From the clear Chocorua water
Slowly slips the wasting ice-sheet.
In the space reclaimed from winter
Pale blue skies are seen reflected,
And the sleeping lion's profile
From among them gleams majestic.

See, reflections calm are broken,
Waves arise and lap the ice-sheet,
And again the wild alarum
Echoes from the gloomy hemlocks.

From the agitated water,
Like a fragment of the picture
Of the April sky just broken,
Rises swiftly towards the forest
He who makes this clamorous discord,
He who broke the calm reflection,
Tyrant of the sleeping waters,
Terror of their finny dwellers.

Thus he comes with melting ice-sheets,
Comes with challenge and with bluster,
Flashing like a feathered arrow
Through the gleaming sun of Easter,
Searching for the schools of minnows
In the shallows, on the sand-bars,
Calling out his wild defiance
To the forest, to the mountain.

Weeks roll by, and May-time lingers,
Full of music, full of perfume.
Over eddying Bearcamp water
Myriad swallows glide and twitter.
Golden sand-banks flank the river ;
Riddled are they, like a frigate
Wrecked by cruel grape and shrapnel,
Riddled by the swallows' borings.

Flash ! a jet of white and azure
Leaves the sand-bank, clips the water,
Rises to a blasted maple,
Drooping o'er the Bearcamp eddies.
Hark ! again the forest quivers
To the harsh and jarring challenge,
And again the fish are startled
By this plunge beneath the waters.

In the sand-bank, near the turf line,
Is a larger, deeper boring
Than the borings of the swallows.
Here the king's proud fisher lodges,

Lodges on a heap of fishbones,
Lodges in the deepest darkness,
Lays her seven snow-white treasures,
Fondles them and gives them being.

FRANK BOLLES.

THE KINGFISHER

Where the river winds through its green retreat,
Smiling, rejoicing on its way,
Whose ripples and rifles ever beat
The old tree-roots and boulders gray ;
Where o'er the sedges' shallows and sands
The cat-tail tufts and river reeds,
At whose edge the patient angler stands,
The kingfisher flies and feeds.
Perch'd on a bending, wither'd spray
That leans o'er the water's flow,
He watches intently for the prey
That swims in the stream below.

Patiently, motionless, long he sits
Like sentry on the castle height ;
Unharm'd the insect by him flits,
The bee and the butterfly bright,
For his dainty food is the finny race,
The minnows below that swim,
The silver shiners, the roach and dace,
The trout o'er the surface that skim.

Lovely and spangled with all the dyes
That melt in the sunset skies,
Wings bright as the peacock's plumes,
Or humming-bird's mottled blooms,
With long bill like that of water-crane,
And crown of dusky greenish stain,
No lovelier robber infests the streams,
Where water runs or fish school gleams.
Where'er sea-beaches far expand,
By shingle-banks and stretch of sand ;
Where'er o'erleaning woodlands shade
The clear brook twinkling thro' the glade,
O bird rapacious ! is thy haunt,
On trees that o'er the currents slant.

Pois'd in mid-air like osprey white
That o'er sea borders takes its flight,
It balances its spotted wings,
Then downward like an arrow springs,
Impaling with its pointed bill
The shiny fish of pond and rill.
The silent angler, as he glides
Along the river's rushing tides,
Hears oft thy sharp, discordant cry,
As your gay pinions flutter by ;
But ne'er molests thy sudden dash,
Thy downward plunge, like sunbeam flash.
But the boy gunner's cruel eyes
Mark thy bright plumage for his prize,
In ambush takes his deadly aim,
And slays thee, his resplendent game !

THE BIRDS

Then flash the wings returning summer calls
Through the deep arches of her forest halls :
The bluebird, breathing from his azure plumes
The fragrance borrowed where the myrtle blooms ;
The thrush, poor wanderer, dropping meekly down,
Clad in his remnant of autumnal brown ;
The oriole, drifting like a flake of fire
Rent like a whirlwind from a blazing spire.
The robin, jerking his spasmodic throat,
Repeats, imperious, his *staccato* note ;
The crack-brained bobolink courts his crazy mate,
Poised on a bulrush tipsy with his weight ;
Nay, in his cage the lone canary sings,
Feels the soft air, and spreads his idle wings.

Spring. — OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

BOB WHITE

“I own the country hereabout,” says Bob White ;
“At early morn I gayly shout, I’m Bob White !
From stubble field and stake-rail fence
You hear me call, without offence,
I’m Bob White ! Bob White !
Sometimes I think I’ll ne’er more say, Bob White ;
It often gives me quite away, does Bob White ;
And mate and I, and our young brood,
When separate, wandering through the wood,
Are killed by sportsmen I invite
By my clear voice — Bob White ! Bob White !
Still, don’t you find I’m out of sight
While I am saying Bob White, Bob White ?”

CHARLES C. MARBLE.

BOB WHITE

When the sun's gold spears were falling
On the new-made morn,
Did I hear a clear voice calling,
Calling from the corn?
Did I hear it — dream, or hear it?
Was I distant, was I near it?
Was it mortal, was it sprite,
Calling: "*White — Bob White ?*
Bob — Bob White —
Bob White" ?

Ah, I hear it, and I see it
Sitting on the rail,
Is it real, can it be it,
My old friend the quail?
Out of season, out of cover,
Turned a migrant, turned a rover,
Sitting boldly in my sight,
Calling: "*White — Bob White !*
Bob — Bob White —
Bob White" ?

Not at hand, my gun and setter ;
Left at rest till fall.
Out of service, and it's better —
Better, after all.
He has changed his covey habits,
In the rag-weeds with the rabbits,
And the manner of his flight,
And he calls: "*Bob White !*
Bob — Bob White —
Bob White !"

But it's he of mottled hackles,
On the field-fence rail,
Out of covey, out of shackles,
It's the same old quail.
These are not the sounds he whistles
'Mid the briers and the thistles,
In the autumn's yellow blight —
No, not : “ *White — Bob White !*
Bob White ! ”

HENRY T. STANTON.

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SUMMER

*And the lark went palpitating
Up through the glorious skies,
His song spilled down from the blue profound
As a song from Paradise.*

.
*The catbird piped in the hazel,
And the harsh kingfisher screamed,
And the crane, in amber and oozy swirls,
Dozed in the reeds and dreamed.*

.
*From out far depths of the forest,
Ineffably sad and lorn,
Like the yearning cry of a long-lost love,
The moan of the dove was borne.*

*And through lush glooms of the thicket
The flash of the redbird's wings
On branches of star-white blooms that shook
And thrilled with its twitterings.*

*Through mossy and viny vistas
Soaked ever with deepest shade,
Dimly the dull owl stared and stared
From his bosky ambuscade.*

*And up through the rifled tree-tops
That signalled the wayward breeze
I saw the hulk of the hawk becalmed
Far out on the azure seas.*

A Vision of Summer. — JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.



JUNE

*In June, on yonder wooded hill, go sit
Beneath the leafy trees, where, overhead,
The brown thrush, playful, taunts the farmer's toil;
The catbird sings his ever varied lay;
While from the elm, amid the neighboring mead,
The oriole his clear, bold whistle sounds;
And, from the mead itself, the bobolink pours
His liquid prelude and his saucy song.
In all this flood of melody one sound
Will ever fill thine ear, — the name of God.*

Hymn of the Seasons. — THOMAS HILL.

*Listen! the choir is singing; all the birds,
In leafy galleries beneath the eaves,
Are singing! Listen, ere the sound be fled,
And learn there may be worship without words.*

My Cathedral. — HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

*June overhead!
All the birds know it, for swift they have sped
Northward, and now they are singing like mad;
June is full-tide for them, June makes them glad.
Hark, the bright choruses greeting the day —
Sorrow away!*

June. — RICHARD BURTON.

BIRDS IN JUNE

The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives ;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings ;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, -
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best ?

The Vision of Sir Launfal. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

And every little bird upon the tree,
Ruffling his plumage bright, for ecstasy
Sang in the wild insanity of glee ;
And seemed in the same lays,
Calling his mate, and uttering songs of praise.

Field Preaching. — PHOEBE CARY.

ROBERT OF LINCOLN

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,
Near to the nest of his little dame,
Over the mountain-side or mead,
Robert of Lincoln is telling his name :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Snug and safe is that nest of ours,
Hidden among the summer flowers.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln is gayly dressed,
Wearing a bright black wedding-coat ;
White are his shoulders and white his crest.
Hear him call his merry note :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Look, what a nice new coat is mine ;
Sure there was never a bird so fine.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln's Quaker wife,
Pretty and quiet, with plain brown wings,
Passing at home a patient life,
Broods in the grass while her husband sings :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Brood, kind creature ; you need not fear
Thieves and robbers while I am here.
Chee, chee, chee.

Modest and shy as a nun is she,
One weak chirp is her only note,
Braggart and prince of braggarts is he,
Pouring boasts from his little throat :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Never was I afraid of man ;
Catch me, cowardly knaves, if you can.
Chee, chee, chee.

Six white eggs on a bed of hay,
Flecked with purple, a pretty sight !
There as the mother sits all day,
Robert is singing with all his might :
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Nice good wife that never goes out,
Keeping house while I frolic about.
Chee, chee, chee.

Soon as the little ones chip the shell
Six wide mouths are open for food ;
Robert of Lincoln bestirs him well,
Gathering seed for the hungry brood.
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
This new life is likely to be
Hard for a gay young fellow like me.
Chee, chee, chee.

Robert of Lincoln at length is made
Sober with work, and silent with care ;
Off is his holiday garment laid,
Half forgotten that merry air,
Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
Spink, spank, spink ;
Nobody knows but my mate and I
Where our nest and our nestlings lie.
Chee, chee, chee.

Summer wanes ; the children are grown ;
 Fun and frolic no more he knows ;
 Robert of Lincoln's a humdrum crone ;
 Off he flies, and we sing as he goes :
 Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
 Spink, spank, spink ;
 When you can pipe that merry old strain,
 Robert of Lincoln, come back again.
 Chee, chee, chee.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

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THE O'LINCON FAMILY

A flock of merry singing-birds were sporting in the grove ;
 Some were warbling cheerily and some were making love.
 There were Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble,
 Conquedle, —

A livelier set were never led by tabor, pipe, or fiddle, —
 Crying, " Phew, shew, Wadolincon ; see, see Bobolincon
 Down among the tickle-tops, hiding in the buttercups ;
 I know the saucy chap ; I see his shining cap
 Bobbing in the clover there, — see, see, see ! "

Up flies Bobolincon, perching on an apple-tree ;
 Startled by his rival's song, quickened by his raillery.
 Soon he spies the rogue afloat, curvetting in the air,
 And merrily he turns about and warns him to beware !
 " 'Tis you that would a wooing go, down among the rushes
 O !

Wait a week, till flowers are cheery ; wait a week, and,
 ere you marry,
 Be sure of a house wherein to tarry ;
 Wadolink, Whiskodink, Tom Denny, wait, wait, wait ! "

Every one's a funny fellow ; every one's a little mellow ;
Follow, follow, follow, follow, o'er the hill and in the
hollow.

Merrily, merrily, there they hie ; now they rise and now
they fly ;

They cross and turn, and in and out, and down the mid-
dle and wheel about,

With a " Phew, shew, Wadolincon ; listen to me, Bobo-
lincon !

Happy's the wooing that's speedily doing, that's speedily
doing,

That's merry and over with the bloom of the clover ;

Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, follow, follow
me ! "

O what a happy life they lead, over the hill and in the
mead !

How they sing, and how they play ! See, they fly away,
away !

Now they gambol o'er the clearing, — off again, and
then appearing ;

Poised aloft on quivering wing, now they soar, and now
they sing,

" We must all be merry and moving ; we must all be
happy and loving ;

For when the midsummer is come, and the grain has
ripened its ear,

The haymakers scatter our young, and we mourn for the
rest of the year ;

Then, Bobolincon, Wadolincon, Winterseeble, haste,
haste away ! "

THE BOB-O-LINKUM

Thou vocal sprite — thou feather'd troubadour !

In pilgrim weeds through many a clime a ranger,
Com'st thou to doff thy russet suit once more

And play in foppish trim the masquing stranger ?
Philosophers may teach thy whereabouts and nature ;

But wise, as all of us, perforce, must think 'em,
The school-boy best hath fixed thy nomenclature,
And poets, too, must call thee Bob-o-Linkum.

Say, art thou, long 'mid forest glooms benighted,

So glad to skim our laughing meadows over —
With our gay orchards here so much delighted,
It makes thee musical, thou airy rover ?

Or are those buoyant notes the pilfer'd treasure
Of fairy isles, which thou hast learn'd to ravish
Of all their sweetest minstrelsy at pleasure,
And, Ariel-like, again on men to lavish ?

They tell sad stories of thy madcap freaks

Wherever o'er the land thy pathway ranges ;
And even in a brace of wandering weeks,

They say, alike thy song and plumage changes ;
Here both are gay ; and when the buds put forth,
And leafy June is shading rock and river,

Thou art unmatch'd, blithe warbler of the North,
While through the balmy air thy clear notes quiver.

Joyous, yet tender — was that gush of song
Caught from the brooks, where 'mid its wild flowers
smiling

The silent prairie listens all day long,
The only captive to such sweet beguiling?
Or didst thou, flitting through the verdurous halls
And column'd isles of western groves symphonious,
Learn from the tuneful woods, rare madrigals,
To make our flowering pastures here harmonious?

Caught'st thou thy carol from Ottawa maid,
Where, through the liquid fields of wild-rice plashing,
Brushing the ears from off the burdened blade,
Her birch canoe o'er some lone lake is flashing?
Or did the reeds of some Savannah South
Detain thee while thy Northern flight pursuing,
To place those melodies in thy sweet mouth,
The spice-fed winds had taught them in their
wooing?

Unthrifty prodigal! is no thought of ill
Thy ceaseless roundelay disturbing ever?
Or doth each pulse in choiring cadence still
Throb on in music till at rest forever?
Yet now in wilder'd maze of concord floating,
'Twould seem that glorious hymning to prolong,
Old Time in hearing thee might fall a-doting,
And pause to listen to thy rapturous song!

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN.

THE BOBOLINK

Hark to the bobolink, beautiful bobolink,
Singing a syrupy song of the south,
Singing a song of the tulips and petals pink,
Sweet as a maiden and ripe as her mouth !

Listen, O beautiful ! list to the bobolink !
Singing a song of the cinnamon-tree :
Hark, O meadow-lark ! hearken, O meadow-wink !
Why do not you sing as gayly as he ?

Honey-sweet, honey-sweet, list to the bobolink
Pouring his soul out like muscadel wine.
Meadow-sweet, meadow-sweet, hark to the bobolink,
Is he not luscious, delicious, divine ?

Beautiful bobolink, silver-tongued bobolink,
Citron and cinnamon sweeten thy song !
Breathing of musk and vanilla, O bobolink,
Sing to me, sing to me all the day long !

Bobolink, bobolink, light-hearted bobolink,
Thou art the Paradise Bird of the West !
Linnet and lark, thou art both of them, bobolink,
Surely in Heaven thou makest thy nest !

JULIAN E. JOHNSTONE.

THE BOBOLINK

Bobolink ! that in the meadow,
Or beneath the orchard's shadow,
Keepest up a constant rattle,
Joyous as my children's prattle ; —
Welcome to the north again !
Welcome to mine ear thy strain,
Welcome to mine eye the sight
Of thy black, thy buff, and white.
Brighter plumes may greet the sun
By the banks of Amazon ;
Sweeter tones may weave the spell
Of enchanting Philomel ;
But the tropic bird would fail,
And the English nightingale,
If we should compare their worth
With thine endless, gushing mirth.

When the Ides of May are past,
June and summer nearing fast,
While from depths of blue above
Comes the mighty breath of love,
Calling out each bud and flower
With resistless, secret power, —
Waking hope and fond desire,
Kindling the erotic fire ; —
Filling youths' and maidens' dreams
With mysterious, pleasing themes ; —
Then, amid the sunlight clear
Floating in the fragrant air,
Thou dost fill each heart with pleasure
By thy glad, ecstatic measure.

A single note so sweet and low,
Like a full heart's overflow,
Forms the prelude : but the strain
Gives us no such tone again,
For the wild and saucy song
Leaps and skips the notes among,
In such quick and sportive play,
Ne'er was madder, merrier lay.

Gayest songster of the spring !
Thy melodies before me bring
Visions of some dream-built land,
Where, by constant zephyrs fanned,
I might walk the livelong day
Embosomed in perpetual May.
Nor care nor fear thy bosom knows ;
For thee a tempest never blows ;
But, when our Northern summer's o'er,
By Delaware's or Schuylkill's shore
The wild-rice lifts its airy head,
And royal feasts for thee are spread.
And when the winter threatens there,
Thy tireless wings yet own no fear,
But bear thee to more Southern coasts,
Far beyond the reach of frosts.

Bobolink ! still may thy gladness
Take from me all taint of sadness ;
Fill my soul with trust unshaken
In that Being who has taken
Care for every living thing,
In summer, winter, fall, and spring.

THE BOBOLINKS

When Nature had made all her birds,
With no more cares to think on,
She gave a rippling laugh — and out
There flew a bobolinkon.

She laughed again, — out flew a mate,
A breeze of Eden bore them
Across the fields of Paradise,
The sunshine reddening o'er them.

Incarnate sport and holiday,
They flew and sang forever ;
Their souls through June were all in tune,
Their wings were weary never.

The blithest song of breezy farms,
Quaintest of field-note flavors,
Exhaustless fount of trembling trills
And demi-semiquavers.

Their tribe, still drunk with air and light
And perfume of the meadow,
Go reeling up and down the sky
In sunshine and in shadow.

One springs from out the dew-wet grass,
Another follows after ;
The morn is thrilling with their songs
And peals of fairy laughter.

From out the marshes and the brook
They set the tall reeds swinging,
And meet and frolic in the air,
Half prattling and half singing.

When morning winds sweep meadow-lands
In green and russet billows,
And toss the lonely elm-tree boughs,
And silver all the willows,

I see you buffeting the breeze
Or with its motion swaying,
Your notes half-drowned against the wind
Or down the current playing.

When far away o'er grassy flats,
Where the thick wood commences,
The white-sleeved mowers look like specks
Beyond the zigzag fences,

And noon is hot, and barn-roofs gleam
White in the pale-blue distance,
I hear the saucy minstrel still
In chattering persistence.

When Eve her domes of opal fire
Piles round the blue horizon,
Or thunder rolls from hill to hill
A Kyrie Eleison, —

Still, merriest of the merry birds,
Your sparkle is unfading, —
Pied harlequins of June, no end
Of song and masquerading.

What cadences of bubbling mirth
Too quick for bar or rhythm !
What ecstasies, too full to keep
Coherent measure with them !

O could I share, without champagne
Or muscadel, your frolic,
The glad delirium of your joy,
Your fun un-apostolic,

Your drunken jargon through the fields
Your bobolinkish gabble,
Your fine anacreontic glee,
Your tipsy reveller's babble !

Nay, — let me not profane such joy
With similes of folly, —
No wine of earth could waken songs
So delicately jolly !

O boundless self-contentment voiced
In flying air-born bubbles !
O joy that mocks our sad unrest,
And drowns our earth-born troubles !

Hope springs with you : I dread no more
Despondency and dulness ;
For Good Supreme can never fail
That gives such perfect fulness.

The Life that floods the happy fields
With song and light and color
Will shape our lives to richer states,
And heap our measures fuller.

CHRISTOPHER P. CRANCH.

BOBOLINK

From blossom-clouded orchards, far away
The bobolink tinkled.

Under the Willows. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

Again I hear the song
Of the glad bobolink, whose lyric throat
Pealed like a tangle of small bells afloat.

Ave. — CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care, the bobolink,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver stops
Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's tremulous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most demurely drops,
A decorous bird of business, who provides
For his brown mate and fledglings six besides,
And looks from right to left, a farmer mid his crops.

An Indian Summer Reverie. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

BOBOLINK

The bobolink ! again I hear
The merriest bird of all the year.
As through my open window floats
The gladsome music of his notes,
Mingling with thrush and sparrow's song,
And tuneful rivals still prolong
The happy chorus, from my heart
The lingering shadows all depart.

.
At length the daybreak in the east,
My heart from fear in part released.
The small fly-catcher first awakes,
The second part the robin takes ;
And then the wren and vireo
Begin with song to overflow.
The hangbird's clear and mellow tune,
And catbird's matins follow soon.
While richer grows the harmony,
Still from my soul the shadows flee.
But when, at last, from bobolink's throat
Bursts out the long-imprisoned note,
In liquid sweetness without measure,
Bubbling his ecstatic pleasure,
Then 'tis sunrise in my heart.
In his pure joy I take a part ;
And while he sings, I silent raise
My morning hymns of thanks and praise.

BOBOLINK

June's bridesman, poet o' the year,
Gladness on wings, the bobolink, is here ;
Half-hid in tip-top apple-blooms he swings,
Or climbs against the breeze with quiverin' wings,
Or, givin' way to't in a mock despair,
Runs down, a brook o' laughter, thru the air.

Biglow Papers. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

A week ago the sparrow was divine ;
The bluebird, shifting his light load of song
From post to post along the cheerless fence,
Was as a rhymer ere the poet come ;
But now, O rapture ! sunshine winged and voiced,
Pipe blown through by the warm wild breath of the West
Shepherding his soft droves of fleecy cloud,
Gladness of woods, skies, waters, all in one,
The bobolink has come, and, like the soul
Of the sweet season vocal in a bird,
Gurgles in ecstasy we know not what
Save *June ! dear June ! now God be praised for June.*

Under the Willows. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

THE CAT-BIRD

Through the night and through the day
Runs a babbling brook away,
'Neath the hill and to the river
Through the pasture, on forever.
Shadowy playmates still I see,
Rivalling the brooklet's glee ;
And the cat-bird's voice I hear,
That so piqued my childhood's ear.

Saucy mocking cat-bird
On the alder spray,
Even now I hear thee,
Though so far away.

Thou incarnate, wicked joy,
How I watched thee as a boy, —
Mocking with thy saucy call
Robin, jay, kingfisher, all, —
Picking up the varied notes
As they fell from feathery throats,
Screeching as in demon glee,
Our astonishment to see !

Ashen-coated cat-bird
On the alder spray,
Mocking all thy fellows
Through the live-long day.

Thou highwayman of the wood,
Our New England Robin Hood,
Eating eggs thou didst not lay,
Making other nests thy prey,

How with childish wrath we heard
Tales of thee, thou wicked bird, —
Of feathered maidens in distress, —
Longing still to make redress !

But thou, saucy cat-bird
On the alder spray,
All our maledictions
Mocked and jeered away !

Oft amid the leaves descried,
With thy pert head cocked one side,
Oddly jerking thy long tail,
How I've heard thee jeer and rail,
Scolding on through all the weathers,
Like a Carlyle dressed in feathers :
Then, to mock the mockery,
Thou wouldst bubble o'er in glee.

O thou cynic cat-bird,
Mimicking mankind,
All our whims and fancies
Laughing down the wind !

Tragic, comic actor thou,
For thy stage an alder bough ;
Now some borrowed joyous note
Pouring from thy feigning throat ;
Now, from wailing puss in sorrow,
Her alarm cry thou dost borrow ;
Till, to us bewildered, seems
Each but fancies of our dreams.

Mimic actor, cat-bird,
Thus thy betters do,
Till 'tween good and evil
Nothing seemeth true.

Cat-bird, but I love thee still,
By the brookside, 'neath the hill,
Laughing, mocking in the trees,
Feathered Mephistopheles ;
Playing out thy varied part
Mirroring the human heart ;
Fretting, scolding, scornful, then
Bursting out in joy again !

Good and evil cat-bird
On the alder spray,
Like thy contradictions
Run our lives away.

MINOT J. SAVAGE.

Note to third stanza.—This stanza is intended to set forth the popular traditions as to the cat-bird's character. The author—as one of his lovers—is inclined to think all such slanderous rumors unfounded.

THE CAT-BIRD

When from the topmost spray began to chant
And flute, and trill, a warbling visitant,
A cat-bird, riotous the world above,
Hasting to spend his heritage ere love
Should music change to madness in his throat,
Leaving him naught but one discordant note.
And as my home-bred chorister outvied
The nightingale, old England's lark beside,

I thought — What need to borrow ? Lustier clime
Than ours Earth has not, — nor her scroll a time
Ampler of human glory and desire
To touch the plume, the brush, the lips with fire.
No sunrise chant on ancient shore and sea,
Since sang the morning stars, more worth shall be
Than ours, once uttered from the very heart
Of the glad race that here shall act its part.
Blithe prodigal, the rhythm free and strong
Of thy brave voice forecasts our poet's song !

Music at Home. — E. C. STEDMAN.

THE CAT-BIRD

A skulker in a thicket, loud and harsh
His note, his message so unbeautiful,
It does belie his bird shape, cheat the sense.
But hark ! All suddenly a wondrous lay,
And from the self-same throat. 'Tis now a thrush
Uttering its unlike spirit on the air ;
And now a robin, cheery-sweet and plumed
From morning minstrelsy that wakes the day ;
And now a mingled rapture of them both
With Somewhat superadded. A strange bird,
Yet in his fashion not unlike to man,
Who often hides a music-potent soul
Under some uncouth semblance of a song
That strikes the ear but lamely, — till some stress
Of life, some lyric impulse, bids him break
His custom, and the world is blessedly
Enthralled, the melody is so divine.

RICHARD BURTON.

TO THE CAT-BIRD

Beside the lovely Raritan,
That quaintly carves its red-shale cliffs,
My childhood's ear drank in thy song,
Ere yet my childish heart could know
How rich the content of the lay.
But fifty years of life may teach
The dullest scholar how to hear
And see, to understand and feel.
Now, in the valley of the Charles,
Thy song familiar lifts the veil ;
I see more plainly, and I hear
More clearly what I heard in youth.
Thy melodies then filled my heart
With childlike happiness, and gave
An added pleasure to the hours
Of boyish idleness or play ;
But now they rouse the deepest thoughts
And holiest feelings of my soul, —
Reverence and faith and gratitude.
I doubt not that thy song is tuned
To please thyself and please thy mate ;
And yet I doubt if you or she
Can feel its meaning as I feel.
More thoughtful than the bobolink,
More joyous than the oriole,
Its liquid warblings speak to me,
Of sweet contentment born of faith ;
Of happiness not thoughtless, stayed
On wisdom, nurtured still by love.

Surely, sweet bird, thy voice, thus rich
In meanings far beyond thy ken,
Is utterance of a higher soul,
Which speaks through thee to human hearts.
Thy song has thus a double sense, —
Bearing one meaning to thy mate,
A higher meaning to our ears :
One meaning thine, for her to feel ;
The other, His who bade thee sing,
And taught our human hearts to feel the song.

THOMAS HILL.

THE CAT-BIRD

He sits on a branch of yon blossoming bush,
This madcap cousin of robin and thrush,
And sings without ceasing the whole morning long !
Now wild, now tender, the wayward song
That flows from his soft, gray, fluttering throat.
But often he stops in his sweetest note,
And, shaking a flower from the blossoming bough,
Drawls out, " Mi-ew, mi-ou ! "

Dear merry mocker, your mimic art
Makes drowsy Grimalkin awake with a start,
And peer all around with a puzzled air —
For who would suppose that one would dare
To mimic the voice of a mortal foe !
You're safe on the bough, as well you know,
And if ever a bird could laugh, 'tis you,
Drawling, " Mi-ow, mi-ew ! "

EDITH THOMAS.



HERMIT THRUSH

THE HERMIT THRUSH

Over the tops of the trees,
And over the shallow stream,
The shepherd of sunset frees
The amber phantoms of dream.
The time is the time of vision ;
The hour is the hour of calm ;
Hark ! On the stillness Elysian
Breaks how divine a psalm !
 *" Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
 Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star ! "*

O singer serene, secure !
From thy throat of silver and dew
What transport lonely and pure,
Unchanging, endlessly new, —
An unremembrance of mirth,
And a contemplation of tears,
As if the musing of earth
Communed with the dreams of the years !
 *" Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
 Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star ! "*

O cloistral ecstatic ! thy cell
In the cool, green aisles of the leaves
Is the shrine of a power by whose spell
Whoso hears aspires and believes !

O hermit of evening ! thine hour
Is the sacrament of desire,
When love hath a heavenlier flower,
And passion a holier fire !
 *“ Oh, clear in the sphere of the air,
 Clear, clear, tender and far,
Our aspiration of prayer
Unto eve's clear star ! ”*

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

THE HERMIT THRUSH

There is a honey scent along the air ;
The hermit thrush has tuned his fleeting note,
Among the silver birches far remote
His spirit voice appeareth here and there,
To fail and fade,
A visionary cadence falling fair,
That lifts and lingers in the hollow shade.

In the Country Churchyard. — DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.

The hermit thrush begins again —
Timorous eremite —
That song of risen tears and pain,
As if the one he loved was far away :
 “ Alas ! another day,”
 “ And now Good Night, Good Night,”
 “ Good Night.”

The End of the Day. — DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.

THE BIRD AND THE HOUR

The sun looks over a little hill
And floods the valley with gold —
 A torrent of gold ;
And the hither field is green and still ;
 Beyond it a cloud outrolled
 Is glowing molten and bright ;
And soon the hill, and the valley and all,
 With a quiet fall,
 Shall be gathered into the night.
And yet a moment more,
 Out of the silent wood,
As if from the closing door
Of another world and another lovelier mood,
Hear'st thou the hermit pour —
 So sweet ! so magical ! —
His golden music, ghostly beautiful.

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

THE WOOD THRUSH

In that soft twilight change of summer eves
From rosy bloom to darkness cool and still,
Sweet from some dusky haunt among the leaves
Thy voice is heard by lonely field or hill,
Chanting thy low, impassioned vesper hymn,
Clear as the silver treble of a stream
Round mossy isles in woodland valleys dim.
There have I hearkened, as one in a dream
Lies smiling, while some dear form bent above

Taps at the muffled portals of the brain
With gentle touch and murmured words of love
Until the heart stirs with tender pain ;
While the wrapt senses soothed in slumbrous balm
Sink down still deeper in delicious calm.

CHARLES L. HILDRETH.

THE WOOD THRUSH

With what a clear
And ravishing sweetness sang the plaintive thrush.
I love to hear his delicate rich voice,
Chanting through all the gloomy day, when loud
Amid the trees is dropping the big rain,
And gray mists wrap the hill ; for aye the sweeter
His song is when the day is sad and dark.

ANON.

WILSON'S THRUSH

On a broken branch of towering pine
Sits a small brown bird of modest mien.
The sunlit red from the western sky
Comes aslant the vine-clad trunks between.

It stretches along on the spicy ground,
Where the needles burn with a ruddy light —
In many a glow like this they've shone,
Up at the pine-top's tapering height.

Murmurs the breath of the coming eve,
Moving the tops of the gilded trees ;
The birches rustle beside the road,
Gently touched by the southern breeze.

Even the catbird's song is stilled,
The scent from the meadow is cool and damp,
The van of the army of darkness comes
Into the forest, and pitches camp.

A gloaming of doubt and of sad regret
Enters our mind as the sun goes down,
But a startling chirp to an answering mate
Reminds us again of the bird in brown.

At once there follows a song so fine,
So mellowed by distance, so wondrous near,
At first we're doubtful if it be his —
So'tender and muffled, so ringing and clear.

Chiming and trilling and answered afar,
Simple, but bearing some mystic good :
And somehow the silence it does not harm,
Though filling each nook of the echoing wood.

Silver-tongued reeds and crystal flutes,
Strings that are blended by dearest hands,
Music from boats that are weary of sea,
Floating ashore to Elysian lands.

Forgotten the gloom that had darkened our mind —
The voice of the singer goes into our ears,
And there makes the music earth never affords,
Which only the soul of the listener hears.

THE VEERY

The moonbeams over Arno's vale in silver flood were
pouring

When first I heard the nightingale a long-lost love
deploring.

So passionate, so full of pain, it sounded strange and eerie ;
I longed to hear a simpler strain, — the wood-notes of
the veery.

The laverock sings a bonnie lay above the Scottish
heather ;

It sprinkles down from far away like light and love to-
gether ;

He drops the golden notes to greet his brooding mate,
his dearie ;

I only know one song more sweet, — the vespers of the
veery.

In English gardens, green and bright and full of fruity
treasure,

I heard the blackbird with delight repeat his merry
measure :

The ballad was a pleasant one, the tune was loud and
cheery,

And yet with every setting sun I listened for the veery.

But far away, and far away, the tawny thrush is singing ;
New England woods, at close of day, with that clear
chant are ringing :

And when my light of life is low, and heart and flesh are
weary ;

I fain would hear, before I go, the wood-notes of the veery.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

From "The Builders and Other Poems."

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THE THRUSH

The thrush sings high on the topmost bough,
Low, tender, low again ; and now
He has changed his tree, you know not how,
For you saw no flitting wing.

All the notes of the forest-throng,
Flute, reed, and string, are in his song ;
Never a fear knows he, nor wrong,
Nor a doubt of anything.

Small room for care in that soft breast ;
All-weather that comes is to him the best,
While he sees his mate close on her nest,
And the woods are full of spring.

He has lost his last year's love, I know, —
He, too, but 'tis little he keeps of woe ;
For a bird forgets in a year or so.
No wonder the thrush can sing.

EDWARD R. SILL.

Anon I start a thrush, and up he wings,
And with a trail of music darts away,
Seeking the republic of high woods,
Where he is citizen, but where his kind
Use melody for speech, and have no flag
Save the waved leaf above each wicker home.

A Morning Pastoral. — HENRY L. ABBEY.

THE BROWN THRASHER

My creamy breast is speckled
(Perhaps you'd call it freckled)
Black and brown.

My pliant russet tail
Beats like a frantic flail
Up and down.

In the top branch of a tree
You may chance to glance at me
When I sing.

But I'm very, *very* shy,
When I silently float by,
On the wing.

Whew there ! *Hi* there ! Such a clatter !
What's the matter — what's the matter ?
Really, really !

Digging, delving, raking, sowing,
Corn is sprouting, corn is growing !
Plant it, plant it !

Gather it, gather it !
Thresh it, thresh it !
Hide it, hide it, do !
(I see it — and you.)

Oh ! — I'm that famous scratcher,
H-a-r-p-o-r-h-y-n-c-h-u-s r-u-f-u-s — Thrasher —
Cloaked in brown.

Citizen Bird. — MABEL OSGOOD WRIGHT.

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THE VESPER SPARROW

It comes from childhood land,
Where summer days are long
And summer eves are bland, —
A lulling good-night song.

Upon a pasture stone,
Against the fading west,
A small bird sings alone,
Then dives and finds its nest.

The evening star has heard
And flutters into sight ;
O childhood's vesper-bird,
My heart calls back, Good-night.

EDITH THOMAS.

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

A mournful cry from the thickets here,
A scream from the fields afar ;
The chirp of a summer warbler near,
Of a spring-tide song a bar ;
Then rattle and rasp,
A groan, a laugh,
Till we fail to grasp
These sounds, by half,
That come from the throat of the ghostly chat,
An imp, if there is one, be sure of that.

Aloft in the sunny air he springs ;
To his timid mate he calls ;
With dangling legs and fluttering wings,
On the tangled smilax falls ;
He mutters, he shrieks —
A hopeless cry ;
You think that he seeks,
In peace, to die ;
But pity him not : 'tis the ghostly chat,
An imp, if there is one, rest sure of that.

Afar in the gloomy swamp, where flits
The will-o'-the-wisp by night,
This elf, a-dreaming, restless sits,
And mutters his strange delight,
In quavers and sharps,
And flute-like note,
With twang of harps,
That swell the throat
Of the mystical, wierd, uncanny chat,
In league with foul spirits, I'm sure of that.

Waste Land Wanderings. — CHARLES C. ABBOTT.
Published by Harper & Bros.

BIRD MUSIC

Singer of priceless melody,
Unguerdoned chorister of air,
Who from the lithe top of the tree
Pourest at will thy music rare,
As if a sudden brook laughed down the
hill-side there.

The purple-blossomed fields of grass
 Waved sea-like to the idle wind,
Thick daisies that the stars surpass,
 Being as fair and far more kind ;
All sweet uncultured things thy wild notes
 bring to mind.

When that enraptured overflow
 Of singing into silence dies,
Thy rapid fleeting pinions show
 Where all thy spell of sweetness lies
Gathered in one small nest from the wide
 earth and skies.

Unconscious of thine audience,
 Careless of praise as of blame,
In simpleness and innocence,
 Thy gentle life pursues its aim,
So tender and serene, that we might blush
 for shame.

The patience of thy brooding wings
 That droop in silence day by day,
The little crowd of callow things
 That joy for weariness repay, —
These are the living spring, thy song the
 fountain's spray.

ROSE T. COOKE.

TO THE WARBLING VIREO

Sweet little prattler, whom the morning sun
Found singing, and this livelong summer day
Keeps warbling still : here have I dreamed away
Two bright and happy hours, that passed like one,
Lulled by thy silvery converse, just begun
And never ended. Thou dost preach to me
Sweet patience and her guest, reality,
The sense of days, and weeks, and months that run
Scarce altering in their round of happiness,
And quiet thoughts, and toils that do not kill,
And homely pastimes. Though the old distress
Loom gray above us both at times, ah, still,
Be constant to thy woodland note, sweet bird ;
By me at least thou shalt be loved and heard.

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

THE BELTED PIPING PLOVER

The Plover utters a piping sound
While on the wing or on the ground ;
All a-tremble it drops its wings,
And with its legs half bent, it sings :
“ My nest is near, come take the eggs,
And take me too, — I’m off my legs.”
In vain men search with eager eyes, —
No nest is found, the plover flies !

CHARLES C. MARBLE.

RED-EYED VIREO

Apostle of the grove across the way,
 Surpliced in color of the foliage,
I list enchanted to thy sermon lay,
 As if it were the wisdom of a sage ;
"You see it ! You know it ! Do you hear me ?
 Do you believe it ?"
Ah ! thou wouldst quicken memory to-day.

Nor morning's chill, nor noon-tide's languorous
 heat,
Doth hold thy voice in thrall, O preacher fair ;
Perched on the greenest bough, thy message sweet
 Thou pourest out upon the vibrant air,
"You see it ! You know it ! Do you hear me ?
 Do you believe it ?"
Over and over in a swift repeat.

Apostle of the grove ! Thy song divine
 The God of Nature gave thee note by note,
To gladder, fuller make the message thine,
 Rippling in beauty from thy dainty throat.
"You see it ! You know it ! Do you hear me ?
 Do you believe it ?"
Would that apostleship so sweet were mine !

JENNY TERRILL RUPRECHT.





JULY

*The russet wren glides in among the vines,
And adds another strand unto its nest,
Then, on the neighboring trellis, pours its song.
The poor man's cottage is its favorite haunt ;
And he is poor indeed, who to his roof
Can welcome not the yearly visitor,
To cheer his door with music !*

The New Pastoral. — THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.

*The little bird sits in the nest and sings
A shy, soft song to the morning light ;
And it flutters a little and prunes its wings.
The song is halting and poor and brief,
And the fluttering wings scarce stir a leaf ;
But the note is prelude to sweeter things,
And the busy bill and the flutter slight
Are proving the wings for a bolder flight !*

Preparation. — PAUL DUNBAR.

*A robin sings his song to-day ;
Sings softly, by his hidden nest,
A little roundelay of rest ;
And as the wind his dwelling swings
He dreams his dream of unfledged wings,
While, blending with his song, I hear
A brook's low babble, somewhere near.*

A July Day. — EBEN EUGENE REXFORD.

THE BIRDS OF KILLINGWORTH

The robin and the bluebird, piping loud,
Filled all the blossoming orchards with their glee ;
The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud
Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be ;
And hungry crows, assembled in a crowd,
Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,
Knowing who hears the ravens cry, and said :
“ Give us. O Lord, this day our daily bread ! ”

Across the Sound the birds of passage sailed,
Speaking some unknown language strange and sweet
Of tropic isle remote, and passing hailed
The village with the cheers of all their fleet ;
Or quarrelling together, laughed and railed
Like foreign sailors, landed in the street
Of seaport town, and with outlandish noise
Of oaths and gibberish frightening girls and boys.

Thus came the jocund spring in Killingworth,
In fabulous days, some hundred years ago ;
And thrifty farmers, as they tilled the earth,
Heard with alarm the cawing of the crow,
That mingled with the universal mirth,
Cassandra-like, prognosticating woe ;
They shook their heads, and doomed with dreadful
words
To swift destruction the whole race of birds.

And a town-meeting was convened straightway
 To set a price upon the guilty heads
 Of these marauders, who, in lieu of pay,
 Levied blackmail upon the garden beds
 And cornfields, and beheld without dismay
 The awful scarecrow, with his fluttering shreds ;
 The skeleton that waited at their feast,
 Whereby their sinful pleasure was increased.

.

The Squire presided, dignified and tall;
 His air impressive and his reasoning sound ;
 Ill fared it with the birds, both great and small ;
 Hardly a friend in all that crowd they found,
 But enemies enough, who every one
 Charged them with all the crimes beneath the sun.

When they had ended, from his place apart
 Rose the Preceptor, to redress the wrong,
 And, trembling like a steed before the start,
 Looked round bewildered on the expectant throng ;
 Then thought of fair Almira, and took heart
 To speak out what was in him, clear and strong,
 Alike regardless of their smile or frown,
 And quite determined not to be laughed down.

“ Plato, anticipating the Reviewers,
 From his Republic banished without pity
 The Poets ; in this little town of yours
 You put to death, by means of a Committee,

The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,
The street-musicians of the heavenly city,
The birds, who make sweet music for us all
In our dark hours, as David did for Saul.

“The thrush that carols at the dawn of day
From the green steeples of the piny wood ;
The oriole in the elm ; the noisy jay,
Jargoning like a foreigner at his food ;
The bluebird balanced on some topmost spray,
Flooding with melody the neighborhood ;
Linnet and meadow-lark, and all the throng
That dwell in nests, and have the gift of song,

“You slay them all ! and wherefore ? for the gain
Of a scant handful more or less of wheat,
Or rye, or barley, or some other grain,
Scratched up at random by industrious feet,
Searching for worms or weevil after rain !
Or a few cherries, that are not so sweet
As are the songs these uninvited guests
Sing at their feast with comfortable breasts.

“Do you ne’er think what wondrous beings these ?
Do you ne’er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak, where melodies
Alone are the interpreters of thought ?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e’er caught !
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even
Are half-way houses on the road to heaven !

“Think every morning when the sun peeps through
The dim, leaf-latticed windows of the grove,
How jubilant the happy birds renew
Their old, melodious madrigals of love !
And when you think of this, remember too
’Tis always morning somewhere, and above
The awakening continents, from shore to shore,
Somewhere the birds are singing evermore.

“Think of your woods and orchards without birds !
Of empty nests that cling to boughs and beams,
As in an idiot’s brain remembered words
Hang empty ’mid the cobwebs of his dreams !
Will bleat of flocks or bellowing of herds
Make up for the lost music, when your teams
Drag home the stingy harvest, and no more
The feathered gleaners follow to your door?

“What ! would you rather see the incessant stir
Of insects in the winrows of the hay,
And hear the locust and the grasshopper
Their melancholy hurdy-gurdies play ?
Is this more pleasant to you than the whirr
Of meadow-lark, and her sweet roundelay,
Or twitter of little field-fares, as you take
Your nooning in the shade of bush and brake?

“You call them thieves and pillagers ; but know,
They are the winged wardens of your farms,
Who from the cornfields drive the insidious foe,
And from your harvests keep a hundred harms ;

Even the blackest of them all, the crow,
Renders good service as your man-at-arms,
Crushing the beetle in his coat of mail,
And crying havoc on the slug and snail.

“ How can I teach your children gentleness,
And mercy to the weak, and reverence
For Life, which, in its weakness or excess,
Is still a gleam of God’s omnipotence ;
Or Death, which, seeming darkness, is no less
The selfsame light, although averted hence,
When by your laws, your actions, and your speech,
You contradict the very things I teach? ”

With this he closed ; and through the audience went
A murmur like the rustle of dead leaves ;
The farmers laughed and nodded, and some bent
Their yellow heads together like their sheaves ;
Men have no faith in fine-spun sentiment
Who put their trust in bullocks and in beeves.
The birds were doomed ; and, as the record shows,
A bounty offered for the heads of crows.

.
And so the dreadful massacre began ;

O’er fields and orchards, and o’er woodland crests,
The ceaseless fusillade of terror ran.

Dead fell the birds, with blood-stains on their breasts,
Or wounded crept away from sight of man,

While the young died of famine in their nests ;
A slaughter to be told in groans, not words,
The very St. Bartholomew of Birds !

The summer came, and all the birds were dead ;
The days were like hot coals ; the very ground
Was burned to ashes ; in the orchards fed
Myriads of caterpillars, and around
The cultivated fields and garden beds
Hosts of devouring insects crawled, and found
No foe to check their march, till they had made
The land a desert without leaf or shade.

Devoured by worms, like Herod, was the town,
Because, like Herod, it had ruthlessly
Slaughtered the Innocents. From the trees spun down
The canker-worms upon the passers-by,
Upon each woman's bonnet, shawl, and gown,
Who shook them off with just a little cry ;
They were the terror of each favorite walk,
The endless theme of all the village talk.

The farmers grew impatient, but a few
Confessed their error, and would not complain,
For, after all, the best thing one can do
When it is raining is to let it rain.
Then they repealed the law, although they knew
It would not call the dead to life again ;
As school-boys, finding their mistake too late,
Draw a wet sponge across the accusing slate.

That year in Killingworth the autumn came
Without the light of his majestic look,
The wonder of the falling tongues of flame,
The illumined pages of his Doom's-Day book.

A few lost leaves blushed crimson with their shame,
And drowned themselves despairing in the brook,
While the wild wind went moaning, everywhere
Lamenting the dead children of the air !

But the next spring a stranger sight was seen,
A sight that never yet by bard was sung,
As great a wonder as it would have been
If some dumb animal had found a tongue !
A wagon, overarched with evergreen,
Upon whose boughs were wicker cages hung,
All full of singing birds, came down the street,
Filling the air with music wild and sweet.

From all the country round these birds were brought,
By order of the town, with anxious quest,
And, loosened from their wicker prisons, sought
In woods and fields the places they loved best,
Singing loud canticles, which many thought
Were satires to the authorities addressed,
While others, listening in green lanes, averred
Such lovely music never had been heard !

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

THE FIELD SPARROW

A bubble of music floats
The slope of the hillside over ;
A little wandering sparrow's notes ;
And the bloom of yarrow and clover,
And the smell of sweet-fern and the bayberry leaf,
On his ripple of song are stealing ;
For he is a chartered thief,
The wealth of the fields revealing.

One syllable, clear and soft
As a raindrop's silvery patter,
Or a tinkling fairy-bell, heard aloft,
In the midst of the merry chatter
Of robin and linnet and wren and jay, —
One syllable, oft repeated :
He has but one word to say,
And of that he will not be cheated.

The singer I have not seen :
But the song I arise and follow
The brown hills over, the pastures green,
And into the sunlit hollow,
With a joy that his life unto mine has lent.
I can feel my glad eyes glisten,
Though he hides in his happy tent,
While I stand outside and listen.

This way would I also sing,
My dear little hillside neighbor !

A tender carol of peace to bring
To the sunburnt fields of labor
Is better than making a loud ado :
Trill on, amid clover and yarrow !
There's a heart-beat echoing you
And blessing you, blithe little sparrow !

LUCY LARCOM.

THE DOVE

If haply thou, O Desdemona Morn,
Shouldst call along the curving sphere, "Remain,
Dear Night, sweet Moor, nay, leave me not in scorn !"
With soft halloos of heavenly love and pain ;

Shouldst thou, O Spring ! a-cower in coverts dark,
'Gainst proud supplanting Summer sing thy plea,
And move the mighty woods through mailed bark
Till mortal heart-break throbbed in every tree ;

Or (grievous *if* that may be *yea* o'er soon !),
If thou, my Heart, long holden from thy Sweet,
Shouldst knock Death's door with mellow shocks of tune,
Sad inquiry to make — *When may we meet ?*

Nay, if ye three, O Morn ! O Spring ! O Heart !
Should chant grave unisons of grief and love,
Ye could not mourn with more melodious art
Than daily doth yon dim sequestered dove.

SIDNEY LANIER.

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WINGS OF A DOVE

I.

At sunset, when the rosy light was dying,
Far down the pathway of the west
I saw a lonely dove in silence flying,
To be at rest.

Pilgrim of air, I cried, could I but borrow
Thy wandering wings, thy freedom blest,
I'd fly away from every careful sorrow,
And find my rest.

II.

But when the dusk a filmy veil was weaving,
Back came the dove to seek her nest
Deep in the forest where her mate was grieving,—
There was true rest.

Peace, heart of mine ! no longer sigh to wander ;
Lose not thy life in fruitless quest.
There are no happy islands over yonder ;
Come home and rest.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

From "The Builders and Other Poems."

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TO THE LAPLAND LONGSPUR

I.

O thou northland bobolink,
Looking over summer's brink
Up to winter, worn and dim,
Peering down from mountain rim,
Something takes me in thy note,
Quivering wing, and bubbling throat ;
Something moves me in thy ways —
Bird, rejoicing in thy days,
In thy upward-hovering flight,
In thy suit of black and white,
Chestnut cape and circled crown,
In thy mate of speckled brown ;
Surely I may pause and think
Of my boyhood's bobolink.

II.

Soaring over meadows wild
(Greener pastures never smiled) ;
Raining music from above,
Full of rapture, full of love ;
Frolic, gay and debonair,
Yet not all exempt from care,
For thy nest is in the grass,
And thou worriest as I pass :
But nor hand nor foot of mine
Shall do harm to thee or thine ;
I, musing, only pause to think
Of my boyhood's bobolink.

III.

But no bobolink of mine
Ever sang o'er mead so fine,
Starred with flowers of every hue,
Gold and purple, white and blue ;
Painted cup, anemone,
Jacob's ladder, fleur-de-lis,
Orchid, harebell, shooting-star,
Crane's-bill, lupine, seen afar,
Primrose, poppy, saxifrage,
Pictured type on Nature's page —
These and others, here unnamed,
In northland gardens, yet untamed,
Deck the fields where thou dost sing,
Mounting up on trembling wing ;
While in wistful mood I think
Of my boyhood's bobolink.

IV.

On Unalaska's emerald lea,
On lonely isles in Behring sea,
On far Siberia's barren shore,
On north Alaska's tundra floor,
At morn, at noon, in pallid night,
We heard thy song and saw thy flight,
While I, sighing, could but think
Of my boyhood's bobolink.

JOHN BURROUGHS.



YOUNG SPARROW HAWK

THE HAWK

Ambushed in yonder cloud of white,
Far-glittering from its azure height,
He shrouds his swiftness and his might !

But oft across the echoing sky,
Long-drawn, though uttered suddenly,
We hear his strange, shrill, bodeful cry.

Winged robber ! in his vaporous tower
Secure in craft, as strong in power,
Coolly he bides the fated hour,

When thro' cloud-rifts of shadowy rise,
Earthward are bent his ruthless eyes,
Where, blind to doom, the quarry lies !

And from dense cloud to noontide glow
(His fiery gaze still fixed below),
He sails on pinions proud and slow !

Till like a fierce, embodied ray,
He hurtles down the dazzling day,
A death-flash on his startled prey ;

And where but now a nest was found,
Voiceful, beside its grassy mound,
A few brown feathers strew the ground !

PAUL HAMILTON HAYNE.

TO THE WHIPPOORWILL

Bird of the lone and joyless night,
Whence is thy sad and solemn lay?
Attendant on the pale moon's light,
Why shun the garish blaze of day?

When darkness fills the dewy air,
Nor sounds the song of happier bird,
Alone, amid the silence there,
Thy wild and plaintive note is heard.

Thyself unseen, thy pensive moan
Pour'd in no living comrade's ear,
The forest's shaded depths alone
Thy mournful melody can hear.

Beside what still and secret spring,
In what dark wood the livelong day,
Sett'st thou with dusk and folded wing,
To while the hours of light away.

Sad minstrel ! thou hast learn'd, like me,
That life's deceitful gleam is vain ;
And well the lesson profits thee,
Who will not trust its charms again.

Thou, unbeguiled, thy plaint dost trill
To listening night, when mirth is o'er ;
I, heedless of the warning, still
Believe, to be deceived once more.

THE WHIPPOORWILL

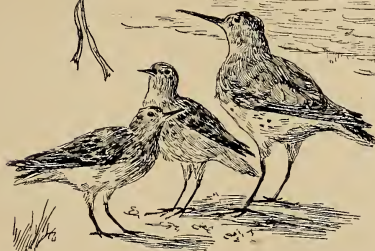
Listen, how the whippoorwill
From his song-bed veiled and dusky
Fills the night ways warm and musky
With his music's throb and thrill !
'Tis the western nightingale
Lodged within the orchard's pale,
Starting into sudden tune
'Mid the amorous air of June,
Lord of all the songs of night,
Bird unseen, of voice outright,
Buried in the sumptuous gloom
Of his shadow-paneled room,
Roofed above by webbed and woven
Leaf and bloom, by moonbeams cloven,
Searched by odorous zephyrs through,
Dim with dusk and damp with dew, —
He it is that makes the night
An enchantment and delight,
Opening his entrancing tale
Where the evening robins fail,
Ending his victorious strain
When the robins wake again.

OBADIAH C. AURINGER.

WHIPPOORWILL

Loud and sudden and near the notes of a whippoorwill
sounded
Like a flute in the woods ; and anon, through the neigh-
boring thickets,
Farther and farther away it floated and dropped into
silence.

Evangeline. — HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.



AUGUST

*Whose wavy flight and cheery whistle
Adorn the wastes o'ergrown with thistle;
No field so foul with noisome weeds
But there the dainty goldfinch feeds,
And greets with song the fervent rays
That flood high noon of August days.*

The Goldfinch. — CHARLES C. ABBOTT.

*I cannot love the man who doth not love,
As men love light, the song of happy birds.*

ALBERT PIKE.

*The little birds are too busy for even a song;
For the old ones are teaching the young ones to fly,
With many a flutter, and many a cry, —
And now, they are flown in the blue sky spaces !*

Blossom, Blossom on the Green Bough. — EDITH THOMAS.

THE GOLDEN-CROWN SPARROW OF ALASKA

I

O minstrel of these borean hills,
Where twilight hours are long,
I would my boyhood's fragrant days
Had known thy plaintive song ;

II

Had known thy vest of ashen gray,
Thy coat of drab and brown,
The bands of jet upon thy head
That clasp thy golden crown.

III

We heard thee in the cold White Pass,
Where cloud and mountain meet,
Again where Muir's great glacier shone
Far spread beneath our feet.

IV

I bask me now on emerald heights
To catch thy faintest strain,
But cannot tell if in thy lay
Be more of joy or pain.

V

Far off behold the snow-white peaks
Athwart the sea's blue shade ;
Anear there rise green Kadiak hills,
Wherein thy nest is made.

VI

I hear the wild bee's mellow chord,
In airs that swim above ;
The lesser hermit tunes his flute
To solitude and love.

VII

But thou, sweet singer of the wild,
I give more heed to thee ;
Thy wistful note of fond regret
Strikes deeper chords in me.

VIII

Farewell, dear bird ! I turn my face
To other skies than thine —
A thousand leagues of land and sea
Between thy home and mine.

JOHN BURROUGHS.

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THE HUMMING-BIRD

Poised in a sheeny mist
Of the dust of bloom,
Clasped to the poppy's breast and kissed,
Baptized in violet perfume
From foot to plume !

Zephyr loves thy wings
Above all lovable things,
And brings them gifts with rapturous murmurings :
Thine is the golden reach of blooming hours ;
Spirit of flowers !

Music follows thee,
And, continually,
Thy life is changed and sweetened happily,
Having no more than roseleaf shade of gloom,
O bird of bloom !

Thou art a wingèd thought
Of tropical hours,
With all the tropics' rare bloom-splendor fraught,
Surcharged with beauty's indefinable powers,
Angel of flowers !

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE HUMMING-BIRD

'Is it a monster bee,
Or is it a midget bird,
Or yet an air-born mystery
That now yon marigold has stirred,
And now on vocal wing
To a neighbor bloom is whirred,
In an aery ecstasy, in a passion of pilfering ?

Ah ! 'tis the humming-bird,
Rich-coated one,
Ruby-throated one,
That is not chosen for song,
But throws its whole rapt sprite
Into the secrets of flowers
The summer days along,
Into most odorous hours,
Into a murmurous sound of wings too swift for
sight !

RICHARD BURTON.

HUMMING-BIRD

When the morning dawns, and the blest sun again
Lifts his red glories from the eastern main,
Then thro' our woodbines, wet with glittering dews,
The flower-fed humming-bird his round pursues ;
Sips, with inserted tube, the honey'd blooms,
And chirps his gratitude as round he roams ;
While richest roses, tho' in crimson drest,
Shrink from the splendor of his gorgeous breast.
What heavenly tints in mingling radiance fly,
Each rapid movement gives a different dye ;
Like scales of burnish'd gold they dazzling show,
Now sink to shade — now like a furnace glow !

ALEXANDER WILSON.

TO A HUMMING-BIRD

Voyager on golden air,
Type of all that's fleet and fair,
Incarnate gem,
Live diadem
Bird-beam of the summer day, —
Whither on your sunny way ?

Loveliest of all lovely things,
Roses open to your wings ;
Each gentle breast
Would give you rest ;
Stay, forget lost Paradise,
Star-bird fallen from happy skies.

Vanished ! Earth is not his home ;
Onward, onward must he roam
Swift passion-thought,
In rapture wrought,
Issue of the soul's desire,
Plumed with beauty and with fire.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.

THE HUMMING-BIRD

Like thoughts that flit across the mind,
Leaving no lasting trace behind,
The humming-bird darts to and fro,
Comes, vanishes before we know.

While thoughts may be but airy things
That come and go on viewless wings,
Nor form nor substance e'en possess,
Nor number know, or more or less,

This leaves an image, well defined,
To be a picture of the mind ;
Its tiny form and colors bright
In memory live, when lost to sight.

There oft it comes at evening's hour,
To flutter still from flower to flower ;
Then vanish midst the gathering shade,
Its momentary visit paid.

JONES VERY.

THE HUMMING-BIRD

So small and fair ;
A sun-dyed dew-drop born with wings.
'Neath Salvia's coral cup it swings,
And to the winded flower clings
As if grown there.

So neat and fair ;
An artist's dream of loveliness —
Its form charms thro' a gauze-like dress
Of rapid wings, that one might guess
Was wrought of air.

So wise and fair ;
A poet's thought that lives by stealth,
From honeyed cups it drinks its health,
With too much joy for making wealth
To purchase care.

So true and fair ;
Each change without affects its coat ;
A fire bell blazes on its throat ;
Yet still it chirps the one clear note
Blown everywhere !

So sweet and fair ;
Its mellow hum hath magic powers,
To wake to life dead summer hours —
Fond memories fresh as fragrant flowers,
In winter bare.

THE HUMMING-BIRD

There is a silence in this summer day,
And in the sweet, soft air no faintest sound
But gentle breezes passing on their way,
Just stirring phantom branches on the ground ;
While in between the softly moving leaves,
Down to their shadows on the grass below,
The brilliant sunshine finds its way and weaves
A thousand patterns glancing to and fro.
A peace ineffable, a beauty rare
Holds human hearts with touch we know divine.
When, hush ! — a little tumult in the air ;
A rush of tiny wings, a something, fine
And frail, darting in fiery haste, all free
In every motion ; scarce we've seen or heard
Ere it is gone ! How can such swiftness be
Incarnate in an atom of a bird !
To know this mite, one instant poised in space,
Scarce tangible, yet seen, then vanishing
From out our ken, leaving no slightest trace !
Ah, whither gone, you glowing jewelled thing ?
Before you came the very air seemed stilled ;
More silent now because with wonder filled.

LAURA M. MARQUAND.

THE HUMMING-BIRD

Emerald-plumèd, ruby-throated,
Flashing like a fair star
Where the humid, dew-becoated,
Sun-illuminèd blossoms are —
See the fleet humming-bird !
Hark to his humming, heard
Loud as the whirr of a fairy king's car !
Sightliest, sprightliest, lightest, and brightest one,
Child of the summer sun,
Shining afar !

Brave little humming-bird !
Every eye blesses thee ;
Sunlight caresses thee,
Forest and field are the fairest for thee,
Blooms, at thy coming stirred,
Bend on each brittle stem,
Nod to the little gem,
Bow to the humming-bird, frolic and free.
Now around the woodbine hovering,
Now the morning-glory covering,
Now the honeysuckle sipping,
Now the sweet clematis tipping,
Now into the bluebell dipping ;
Hither, thither, flashing, bright'ning,
Like a streak of emerald lightning ;
Round the box, with milk-white phlox ;
Round the fragrant four-o'clocks ;

O'er the crimson quamoclit,
Lightly dost thou wheel and flit ;
 Into each tubèd throat
 Dives little Ruby-throat.

Bright-glowing airy thing,
Light-going fairy thing,
 Not the grand lyre-bird
Rivals thee, splendid one ! —
Fairy-attended one
 Green-coated fire-bird !
Shiniest fragile one,
Tiniest agile one,
Falcon and eagle tremble before thee !
Dim is the regal peacock and lory,
 And the pheasant, iridescent,
Pales before the gleam and glory
 Of the jewel-change incessant
When the sun is streaming o'er thee !

Hear thy soft humming,
Like a sylph's drumming !

ANON.

A HUMMING-BIRD

Somewhere I've seen thee, strange sprite,
Somewhere I've known thee ere now,
Among the wild broods of the night
 That nest on the Morphean bough !

Thou with a silent throat
Dost busily rifle all blooms ;
O flitter-winged bandit, thy note
Is the bee's song shed from thy plumes !

Whisper those things in my ear,
That thou art so ready to tell
To creatures too heedless to hear, —
The lily, the foxglove's bell !

Aha ! is it so ? — By these eyes,
Prospero's servant I see, —
Ariel clad in the guise
Of a humming-bird lightsome and free !

EDITH THOMAS.

HUMMING-BIRD

And the humming-bird, that hung
Like a jewel up among
The tilted honeysuckle-horns,
They mesmerized, and swung
In the palpitating air,
Drowsed with odors strange and rare,
And, with whispered laughter, slipped away
And left him hanging there.

The South Wind and the Sun. — JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

And a soft bass is heard
From the quick pinions of the humming-bird.

Our Fellow-Worshippers. — WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

HUMMING-BIRD

Thou tiny spirit of the air,
With sylph-like motion, glad and free ;
Who can thy meteor presence spare,
Whose childhood passed near thee ?
For near our door thou lov'st to dip
Thy bill in the bignonia's bloom
And of its nectar juices sip
'Mid summer's choice perfume.

T. A. CONRAD.

Overhead on a maple prong
The least of birds, a jewelled sprite,
With burnished throat and needle bill,
Wags his head in the golden light,
Till it flashes, and dulls, and flashes bright,
Cheeping his microscopic song.

Field Notes. — EDWARD SILL.

KING BIRD

Far in the south, where vast Maragnon flows,
And boundless forests unknown wilds inclose ;
Vine-tangled shores, and suffocating woods,
Parched up with heat or drowned with pouring floods,
Where each extreme alternately prevails,
And Nature sad their ravages bewails ;
Lo ! high in air, above those trackless wastes,
With Spring's return the king bird hither hastes ;
Coasts the famed Gulf,¹ and from his height explores

¹ Of Mexico.

Its thousand streams, its long-indented shores,
Its plains immense, wide op'ning on the day,
Its lakes and isles, where feathered millions play.
All tempt not him ; till, gazing from on high,
COLUMBIA'S regions wide below him lie ;
There end his wanderings and his wish to roam,
There lie his native woods, his field, his *home* ;
Down, circling, he descends, from azure heights,
And on a full-blown sassafras alights.

Fatigu'd and silent, for a while he views
His old frequented haunts, and shades recluse ;
Sees brothers, comrades, every hour arrive, —
Hears humming round, the tenants of the hive ;
Love fires his breast ; he woos, and soon is blest,
And in the blooming orchard builds his nest.

Come now, ye cowards ! ye whom Heaven disdains,
Who boast the happiest home, — the richest plains,
On whom, perchance, a wife, an infant's eye
Hang as their hope, and on your arm rely,
Yet, when the hour of danger and dismay
Comes on your country, sneak in holes away,
Shrink from the perils ye were bound to face,
And leave those babes and country to disgrace ;
Come here, (if such we have,) ye dastard herd !
And kneel in dust before this noble bird.

When the speck'd eggs within his nest appear,
Then glows affection, ardent and sincere.
No discord sours him when his mate he meets,
But each warm heart with mutual kindness beats.

For her repast he bears along the lea
The bloated gad-fly, and the balmy bee ;
For her repose scours o'er th' adjacent farm,
Whence hawks might dart, or lurking foes alarm ;
For now abroad a band of ruffians prey,
The crow, the cuckoo, and th' insidious jay :
These, in the owner's absence, all destroy,
And murder every hope and every joy.

Soft sits his brooding mate, her guardian he,
Perch'd on the top of some tall, neighb'ring tree ;
Thence, from the thicket to the concave skies,
His watchful eye around unceasing flies.
Wrens, thrushes, warblers, startled at his note,
Fly in affright the consecrated spot.
He drives the plundering jay, with honest scorn,
Back to his woods, — the mocker, to his thorn ;
Sweeps round the cuckoo, as the thief retreats ;
Attacks the crow ; the diving hawk defeats ;
Darts on the eagle downwards from afar,
And, 'midst the clouds, prolongs the whirling war.
All danger o'er, he hastens back elate,
To guard his post, and feed his faithful mate.

Behold him now, his little family flown,
Meek, unassuming, silent, and alone,
Lur'd by the well-known hum of favorite bees,
As slow he hovers o'er the garden trees ;
(For all have feelings, passions, whims that lead
Some favorite wish, some appetite to feed ;)
Straight he alights, and, from the pear-tree, spies
The circling stream of humming insects rise ;

Selects his prey, darts on the busy brood,
And shrilly twitters o'er his savory food.

Ah ! ill-timed triumph ! direful note to thee,
That guides thy murderer to the fatal tree ;
See where he skulks, and takes his gloomy stand,
The deep-charg'd musket hanging in his hand ;
And, gaunt for blood, he leans it on a rest,
Prepared, and pointed at thy snow-white breast.
Ah, friend ! good friend ! forbear that barbarous deed !
Against it Valor, Goodness, Pity plead ;
If ere a family's griefs, a widow's woe,
Have reach'd the soul, in mercy let him go !
Yet, should the tear of pity nought avail,
Let *interest* speak, let *gratitude* prevail.
Kill not thy friend, who thy whole harvest shields,
And sweeps ten thousand vermin from thy fields ;
Think how this dauntless bird, thy poultry's guard,
Drove every hawk and eagle from thy yard ;
Watched round thy cattle as they fed, and slew
The hungry, blackening swarms that round them flew.
Some small return — some little right resign,
And spare *his* life whose services are thine !
— I plead in vain ! Amid the bursting roar,
The poor lost king bird welters in his gore !

ALEXANDER WILSON.



KING BIRD

THE KING BIRD

Hark ! as the red-bird dumb to shelter flies,
Fighting his way from Amazonian skies
The king bird comes ; and on yon flow'ring tree,
Swift from whose bloom in terror darts the bee,
Screaming alights ; his heritage with pride
Surveys, of tree and thorn-hedge spreading wide,
But most of air — with insects all alive,
And what to him is luxury, the hive ;
Then stoops, selects some scraggly orchard limb —
Its height a momentary thought with him,
Who, to protect the brood confined there,
Relies upon his courage and his care —
On which he boldly plants his nest, in sight,
And dares the eagle to dispute his right.
Come ! ye that make a thriving land your prey,
Yet, at the call of danger, sneak away ;
Come, ye unfeeling, selfish, craven herd,
And blush to learn your duty from a bird.
The sticks once laid, with wither'd flowers entwin'd
And wool, impervious to the wet and wind,
His kind suspicion then admits no guest,
But, friend or foe, he drives them from his nest :
And perch'd upon some top-twig, bare and high,
That no intruder may escape his eye,
With crest that bristles at each passing wing
And trembles with his eagerness to spring,
Marks out a realm, whose limits vary still,
Like those of other despots, at his will,
And ere it with impunity be crossed,
Bravely resolves to perish at his post.

But chief the crow his desperate sally flies,
And wheels and dives and flounders through the skies ;
In vain ; for darting down he clings behind
And tears and strews her feathers on the wind ;
Th' astonish'd ploughman stops his team, to spy
Red drops descend, and lifts his wondering eye.
Then, while the little victor stoops below
Amid a shower of plumes, his coward foe
Hies to the wood for shelter or the cleft,
And doubting if she has a feather left,
Thinks in the rustling leaves she hears him sweep,
And sees him, horrid spectre ! in her sleep.
But having train'd his nursling to the sky
And taught him properly to snap his fly,
The rightful cause for which he battled o'er,
Unlike his betters, he wakes war no more :
And hovering o'er the mead with flickering wing,
Or perch'd in ambush by the hive or spring,
Intent with restless eye his watch to keep,
Selects and snaps his victim, with a sweep.

GEORGE HILL.

TO A TIP-UP

Slim, unbalanced bird,
A-tip upon the sands,
Here's a friendly word,
A mental shaking-hands.

Ludicrous enough,
But not more so than I :
Of such teet'ring stuff
Is all mortality.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.

THE SANDPIPER

Across the narrow beach we flit,
 One little sandpiper and I ;
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
 The scattered driftwood, bleached and dry,
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
 The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit, —
 One little sandpiper and I.

Above our heads the sullen clouds
 Scud black and swift across the sky ;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
 Stand out the white light-houses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
 I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach, —
 One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims along,
 Uttering his sweet and mournful cry ;
He starts not at my fitful song,
 Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong ;
 He scans me with a fearless eye.
Stanch friends are we, well tried and strong,
 The little sandpiper and I.

Comrade, where wilt thou be to-night,
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will burn so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, though wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky;
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

CELIA THAXTER.

SANDPIPERS

The sandpipers trip on the glassy beach,
Ready to mount and fly;
Whenever a ripple reaches their feet
They rise with a timorous cry.

Take care, they pipe, take care, take care,
For this is a treacherous main,
And though you may sail so deftly out,
You may never come home again.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.

THE LITTLE BEACH SANDERLING

By the beach border, where the breeze
Comes freighted from the briny seas,
By sandy bar and weedy rock
I frequent meet thy roving flock;
Now hovering o'er the bending sedge,
Now gather'd at the ocean edge;
Probing the sand for shrimps and shells,
Or worms marine in hidden cells,

A restless and inconstant band,
Forever flitting o'er the sand.

Sandpiper ! — haunting every shore
Where'er the waves of ocean roar ;
Old voyagers that roam the deep
Tell that your dusky pinions sweep
O'er the remotest islands set
In ocean's emerald coronet.

ISAAC MCCLELLAN.

THE LITTLE BEACH-BIRD

Thou little bird, thou dweller by the sea,
Why takest thou its melancholy voice?
And with that boding cry
Along the breakers fly?
Oh ! rather, bird, with me
Through the fair land rejoice !

Thy flitting form comes ghostly dim and pale,
As driven by a beating storm at sea ;
Thy cry is weak and scared,
As if thy mates had shared
The doom of us : thy wail, —
What doth it bring to me ?

Thou call'st along the sand, and haunt'st the surge,
Restless and sad ; as if, in strange accord
With the motion and the roar
Of waves that drive to shore,
One spirit did ye urge, —
The Mystery, — the Word.

Of thousands, thou, both sepulchre and pall
Old Ocean art ! A requiem o'er the dead,
From out thy gloomy cells,
A tale of mourning tells, —
Tells of man's woe and fall,
His sinless glory fled.

Then turn thee, little bird, and take thy flight
Where the complaining sea shall sadness bring
Thy spirit never more.
Come, quit with me the shore
For gladness and the light,
Where birds of summer sing !

RICHARD H. DANA.

THE LOON

Tameless in his stately pride, along the lake of islands,
Tireless speeds the lonely loon upon his diving
track ; —
Emerald and gold emblazon, satin-like, his shoulder,
Ebony and pearl inlay, mosaic-like, his back.
Sailing, thus sailing, thus sails the brindled loon,
When the wave rolls black with storm, or sleeps in
summer noon.

Sailing through the islands, oft he lifts his loud bravura ; —
Clarion-clear it rings, and round etherial trumpets
swell ; —
Upward looks the feeding deer, he sees the aiming
hunter,

Up and then away the loon has warned his comrade
well.

Sailing, thus sailing, thus sails the brindled loon,
Pealing on the solitude his sounding bugle-tune.

Sacred is the loon with eye of wild and flashing crimson ;
Eyes that saw the Spirit Hah-wen-ne-yo through the
air

Falling, faint, a star — a shaft of light — a shape of
splendor —

Falling on the deep that closed that shining shape to
bear.

Sailing, thus sailing, thus sailed the brindled loon
With the grand shape falling all a-glitter from the moon.

Long before the eagle furls his pinion on the pine-top,
Long before the blue-bird gleams in sapphire through
the glen,

Long before the lily blots the shoal with golden apples,
Leaves the loon his southern sun to sail the lake again.

Sailing, then sailing, then sails the brindled loon,
Leading with his shouting call the Spring's awakened
croon.

Long after bitter chills have pierced the windy water,

Long after Autumn dies all dolphin like away,

Long after coat of russet dons the deer for winter,

Plies the solitary loon his cold and curdled bay.

Sailing, there sailing, there sails the brindled loon,

Till in chains no more to him the lake yields watery
boon.

A NOCTURN

While bright Hesper leans from heaven
 Through the soft, dove-colored even,
 While the grass-bird calleth peace
 On the fields that have release
 From the sickle and the rake.

.
 Still, wherever thou dost pass,
 Chimes the cricket in the grass ;
 And the plover's note is heard, —
 Moonlight's wild enchanted bird,
 Flitting, wakeful and forlorn,
 Round the meadows lately shorn.

EDITH THOMAS.

THE RAIN-CROW ¹

I

Can freckled August, — drowsing warm and blonde
 Beside a wheat-stock in the white-topped mead,
 In her hot hair the ox-eyed daisies wound, —
 O bird of rain, lend aught but sleepy heed
 To thee? when no plumed weed, no feather'd seed
 Blows by her ; and no ripple breaks the pond,
 That gleams like flint between its rim of grasses,
 Through which the dragon-fly forever passes
 Like splintered diamond.

II

Drouth weights the trees, and from the farmhouse eaves
 The locust, pulse-beat of the summer day,

¹ Rain-crow is one of the popular names for the cuckoo.

Throbs ; and the lane, that shambles under leaves
Limp with the heat — a league of rutty way —
Is lost in dust ; and sultry scents of hay
Breathe from the panting meadows heaped with sheaves —
Now, now, O bird, what hint is there of rain,
In thirsty heaven or on burning plain,
That thy keen eye perceives ?

III

But thou art right. Thou prophesiest true.
For hardly hast thou ceased thy forecasting,
When, up the western fierceness of scorched blue,
Great water-carrier winds their buckets bring
Brimming with freshness. How their dippers ring
And flash and rumble ! lavishing dark dew
On corn and forest-land, that, streaming wet,
Their hilly backs against the downpour set,
Like giants vague in view.

IV

The butterfly, safe under leaf and flower,
Has found a roof, knowing how true thou art ;
The bumble-bee, within the last half-hour,
Has ceased to hug the honey to its heart ;
While in the barnyard, under shed and cart,
Brood-hens have housed. — But I, who scorned thy
power,
Barometer of the birds, — like August there, —
Beneath a beech, dripping from foot to hair,
Like some drenched truant, cower.

AUTUMN

*Through the trees
The golden robin moves. The purple finch,
That on wild cherry and red cedar feeds,
A winter bird, comes with its plaintive whistle,
And pecks by the witch-hazel, whilst aloud,
From cottage roofs, the warbling blue-bird sings.*

Autumn. — HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

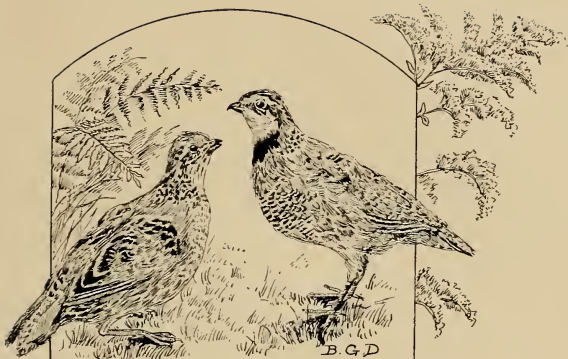
*Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails,
With watchful, measuring eye, and for his quarry waits.*

*The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer.*

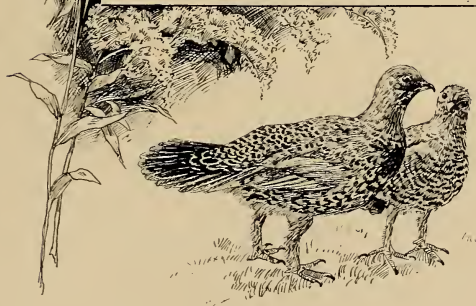
An Indian Summer Reverie. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

The single crow a single caw lets fall.

An Indian Summer Reverie. — JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.



September.



SEPTEMBER

*From the reeds would spring,
Whirring, the meadow-wren, and start and stare
And sputter, lighting from their bending tops,
As if indignant and no less amazed
That I should thus, with causeless and ill-timed
Approach, upon the privacy intrude
And urgent duties of her precious life ;
Or meditative heron, perched upon
The timber-head of some old hulk, half sunk
And strewn with barnacles, would slowly thrust
Above the sedge his long, lank neck : then crouch
And floundering upwards, with an awkward flap
Of his dank wing, and knot of sea-grass dangling
From his long legs, thrown backward and uncouth,
Saunter away to some more quiet haunt ;
Or sentry crow, caught sleeping at his watch,
Bestirred himself and called with hurried croak
Unto his fellows, that with clamorous cry
Rose, and their train winged blackening to the wood.*

.
*Anon, a troop of noisy, roving jays,
Whisking their gaudy top-knots, would surprise
And seize upon the top of some tall tree,
Shrieking, as if on purpose to enjoy
The consternation of the noontide stillness.*

Ramblings in Autumn. — GEORGE HILL.

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun ?

Forbearance. — RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

AUTUMN

On slumberous wings the vulture tried his flight,
The dove scarce heard his singing mate's complaint ;
And, like a star slow drowning in the light,
The village church vane seemed to pale and faint.

The sentinel cock upon the hillside crew —
Crew thrice, — and all was stiller than before ;
Silent, till some replying warden blew
His alien horn, and then was heard no more.

Where erst the jay, within the elm's tall crest,
Made garrulous trouble round her unfledged young,
And, where the oriole swung her swaying nest,
By every light wind like a censer swung ;

Where sang the noisy martins of the eaves,
The busy swallows circling ever near,
Foreboding, as the rustic mind believes,
An early harvest and a plenteous year ;

Where every bird that waked the vernal feast
Shook the sweet slumber from its wings at morn,
To warn the reapers of the rosy east, —
All now was songless, empty, and forlorn.

Alone from out the stubble piped the quail,
And croaked the crow through all the dreamy gloom ;
Alone the pheasant, drumming in the vale,
Made echo to the distant cottage loom.

The Closing Scene. — THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.
Permission of J. B. Lippincott Co.

The last of summer's melodists are fled,
Their nests are tenantless, their songs are still.

Parting of Summer. — CHARLES L. HILDRETH.

The robin, that was busy all the June
Before the sun had kissed the topmost bough,
Catching our hearts up in his golden tune,
Has given place to the brown cricket now.

Autumn. — ALICE CARY.

TO A CITY PIGEON

Stoop to my window, thou beautiful dove ;
Thy daily visits have touched my love.
I watch thy coming, and list the note
That stirs so low in thy mellow throat,
And my joy is high
To catch the glance of thy gentle eye.

Why dost thou sit on the heated eaves,
And forsake the wood with its freshen'd leaves ?
Why dost haunt the sultry street,
When the paths of the forest are cool and sweet ?
How canst thou bear
This noise of people — this sultry air ?

Thou alone of the feather'd race
Dost look unscared on the human face ;
Thou alone, with a wing to flee,
Dost love with man in his haunts to be ;
And the "gentle dove"
Has become a name for trust and love.

A holy gift is thine, sweet bird !
Thou'rt named with childhood's earliest word !
Thou'rt link'd with all that is fresh and wild
In the prison'd thoughts of the city child ;
 And thy glossy wings
Are its brightest image of moving things.

It is no light chance. Thou art set apart
Wisely by Him who has tamed thy heart,
To stir the love for the bright and fair
That else were seal'd in this crowded air ;
 I sometimes dream
Angelic rays from thy pinions stream.

Come then, ever, when daylight leaves
The page I read, to my humble eaves,
And wash thy breast in the hollow spout,
And murmur thy low sweet music out !
 I hear and see
Lessons of heaven, sweet bird, in thee !

N. P. WILLIS.

THE BELFRY PIGEON

*" Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
Of people, and my heart of one sad thought."*

SHELLEY.

On the cross beam under the Old South bell
The nest of a pigeon is builded well.
In summer and winter that bird is there,
Out and in with the morning air :
I love to see him track the street,
With his wary eye and active feet ;
And I often watch him as he springs,
Circling the steeple with easy wings,
Till across the dial his shade has passed,
And the belfry edge is gained at last.
'Tis a bird I love; with its brooding note,
And the trembling throb in its mottled throat ;
There's a human look in its swelling breast,
And a gentle curve of its lowly crest ;
And I often stop with the fear I feel —
He runs so close to the rapid wheel.

Whatever is rung on that noisy bell, —
Chime of the hour or funeral knell, —
The dove in the belfry must hear it well.
When the tongue swings out to the midnight moon,
When the sexton cheerily rings for noon,
When the clock strikes clear at morning light,
When the child is waked with " nine at night,"
When the chimes play soft in the Sabbath air,
Filling the spirit with tones of prayer, —

Whatever tale in the bell is heard,
He broods on his folded feet unstirred,
Or rising half in his rounded nest,
He takes the time to smooth his breast,
Then drops again with filmèd eyes,
And sleeps as the last vibration dies.

Sweet bird ! I would that I could be
A hermit in the crowd like thee !
With wings to fly to wood and glen,
Thy lot, like mine, is cast with men ;
And daily with unwilling feet,
I tread, like thee, the crowded street ;
But, unlike me, when day is o'er,
Thou canst dismiss the world and soar,
Or, at a half-felt wish for rest,
Canst smooth thy feathers on thy breast,
And drop, forgetful, to thy nest.

I would that in such wings of gold
I could my weary heart unfold ;
I would I could look down unmoved
(Unloving as I am unloved),
And while the world throngs on beneath,
Smooth down my cares and calmly breathe ;
And never sad with others' sadness,
And never glad with others' gladness,
Listen, unstirred, to knell or chime,
And, lapp'd in quiet, bide my time.

N. P. WILLIS.

THE VULTURE

All day long we roam, we roam,
My shadow fleet and I ;
One searches all the land and sea,
And one the trackless sky ;
But when the taint of death ascends
My airy flight to greet,
As friends around the festal board,
We meet ! we meet ! we meet !

Ah ! none can read the signs we read,
No eye can fathom the gales,
No tongue can whisper our secret deed,
For dead men tell no tales.
The spot on the plains is miles away ;
But our wings are broad and fleet, —
The wave-tossed speck in the eye of the day
Is far — but we meet ! we meet !

The voice of the battle is haste, oh, haste !
And down the wind we speed ;
The voice of the wreck moans up from the deep,
And we search the rank seaweed.
The maiden listens the livelong day
For the fall of her lover's feet ;
She wonders to see us speeding by, —
She would die if she saw us meet !

L'ENVOI.

Sweeping in circles, my shadow and I,
Leaving no mark on the land or sky,
When the double circles are all complete,
At the bedside of death we meet ! we meet !

HARRY STILLWELL EDWARDS.



TURKEY VULTURE

THE DUSKY DUCK

September nights have scarcely felt
The first cool breath of autumn time,
Ere high the black duck pinions fan
Our shore-line, in their flight sublime.

At first these swift fowl skim the cloud,
And high in lessening circles sweep ;
Then slow to lonely bays descend,
Glad to repose their wings in sleep.

And so for passing weeks they haunt
The inland marsh and muddy creek,
Where in the shallows or the grass,
Their pastime or their food they seek.

Most shy, at midday they disport
In ocean surf or ample bay ;
But when the evening shades pervade
And fades the twilight of the day,

Then with a soaring flight they rise
And seek some lonely marsh remote,
Some salt-pool in the meadow scoop'd ;
And here their quacking numbers float,
And here the watchful fowler lies
In ambush for the dusky prize.

ISAAC McLELLAN.





OCTOBER.



OCTOBER

*When naught of song is heard,
Save the jay laughing while all Nature grieves,
Or the lone chirp of some forgotten bird
Among the fallen leaves.*

Fallen Leaves. — JOHN JAMES PIATT.

*Out of the frosty north, like Indian arrows,
In never faltering flight the wild ducks flew,
And from the windy fields the summer sparrows
Reluctantly their feathery tribes withdrew.*

October. — JAMES NEWTON MATHEWS.

*The little birds upon the hillside lonely,
Flit noiselessly along from spray to spray,
Silent as a sweet, wandering thought, that only
Shows its bright wings, and softly glides away.*

A Still Day in Autumn. — MRS. SARAH H. WHITMAN.

BIRDS IN OCTOBER

When October sears the oak leaves
Silence settles on the forest.
Southward have the swallows darted,
Southward sped the warbler legions,
Southward are the thrushes flocking,
Crows complaining seek the Ocean.
With the snowflakes o'er the mountains
Hasten past the hawks from Northland,
Speed along the titmice, juncos,
White-crowned sparrows, wrens, and creepers,
Tiny kinglets, sweet-voiced bluebirds,
All in eager search for havens
Where the touch of winter kills not.
Close behind them come the crossbill,
Come with joyous notes the redpolls,
Come pine grosbeaks, too confiding,
Come the hosts from Arctic nestings.

The Ruffed Grouse. — FRANK BOLLES.

O JAY

O Jay! —
Blue-jay! —
What are you trying to say?
I remember, in the spring
You pretended you could sing;
But your voice is now still queerer,
And as yet you've come no nearer
To a song.

In fact, to sum the matter,
I never heard a flatter
Failure than your doleful clatter.
Don't you think it's wrong?
It was sweet to hear your note,
I'll not deny,
When April set pale clouds afloat
O'er the blue tides of sky,
And 'mid the wind's triumphant drums
You in your white and azure coat,
A herald proud, came forth to cry,
"The royal summer comes!"

But now that autumn's here,
And the leaves curl up in sheer
Disgust,
And the cold rains fringe the pine,
You really must
Stop that supercilious whine —
Or you'll be shot, by some mephitic
Angry critic.

You don't fulfil your early promise :
You're not the smartest
Kind of artist,
Any more than poor blind Tom is.
Yet somehow, still,
There's meaning in your screaming bill.
What *are* you trying to say?

Sometimes your piping is delicious,
And then again it's simply vicious ;
Though on the whole the varying jangle
Weaves round me an entrancing tangle
Of memories grave or joyous :
Things to weep or laugh at ;
Love that lived at a hint, or
Days so sweet, they'd cloy us ;
Nights I have spent with friends ; —
Glistening groves of winter,
And the sound of vanished feet
That walked by the ripening wheat ;
With other things . . . Not the half that
Your cry familiar blends
Can I name, for it is mostly
Very ghostly ; —
Such mixed-up things your voice recalls,
With its peculiar quirks and falls.

Possibly, then, your meaning plain,
Is that your harsh and broken strain
Tallies best with a world of pain.

Well, I'll admit
There's merit in a voice that's truthful :
Yours is not honey-sweet nor youthful,
But querulously fit.
And if we cannot sing, we'll say
Something to the purpose, Jay !

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP.

THE BLUE JAY

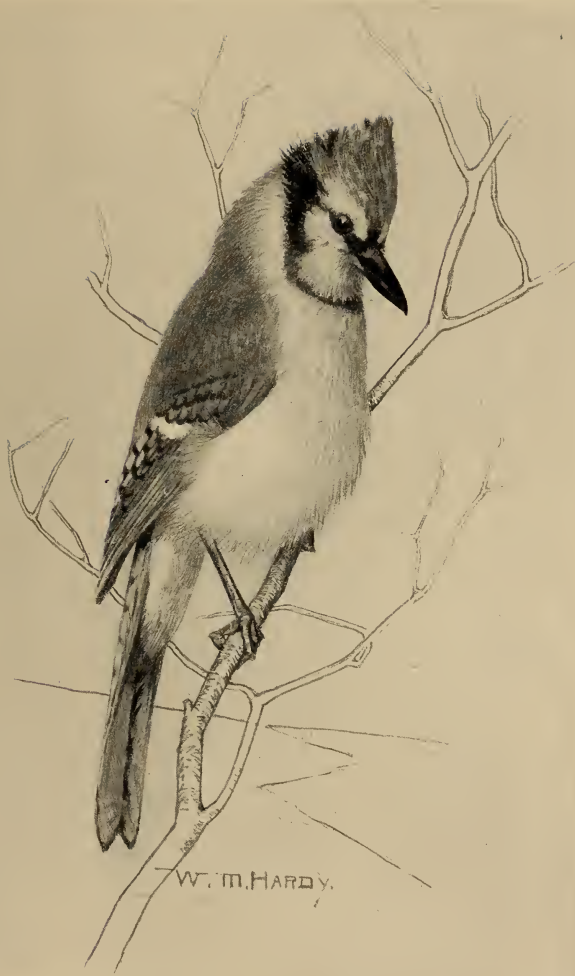
His eye is bright as burnished steel,
His note a quick defiant cry ;
Harsh as a hinge his grating squeal
Sounds from the keen wind sweeping by.

Rains never dim his smooth blue coat,
The winter never troubles him.
No fog puts hoarseness in his throat,
Or makes his merry eyes grow dim.
His cry at morning is a shout,
His wing is subject to his heart.
Of fear he knows not — doubt
Did not draw his sailing-chart.

He is an universal emigré ;
His foot is set in every land.
He greets me by gray Casco bay,
And laughs across the Texas sand.
In heat or cold, in storm or sun
He lives unfearingly, and when he dies
He folds his feet up one by one
And turns a last look at the skies.

He is the true American ! he fears
No journey and no wood or wall ;
And in the desert, toiling voyagers
Take heart of courage from his call.

HAMLIN GARLAND.



BLUE JAY

THE BLUE JAY

From among Chocorua's tenants,
From among the birds of Crowlands,
One in all eyes is a villain.
Loathed, detested, hated, dreaded,
Known to be a thief and ruffian,
Known to be a foul assassin,
Known to be a sneak and coward,
Hated doubly for his beauty.

Crows are open in marauding,
Crows are black and bold and bragging ;
Owls confine their crimes to twilight
Or the hours of moonlit silence ;
Hawks in highest heaven hover,
Soar in sight of all their victims :
None can charge them with deception,
All their crimes are deeds of daring.

Clad in blue with snow-white trimmings,
Clean and smooth in every feather,
Plumed and crested like a dandy,
Keen of vision, strong of muscle,
Shrewd in mimicry and dodging,
Knowing every copse and thicket,
Warm in snow and cool in summer,
Is the blue jay still a villain ?
Outlawed by all bird tribunals,
As a wretch disguised, he's branded,
Shunned by every feathered creature ;
Yet he prospers, man admires him.

Through the tedious months of winter
Round the corn-barn's step he lingers,
Boldly down among the poultry
Comes he to secure their kernels ;
Through the barb'ries, through the cedars,
Prowls he searching for their berries,
In the spruces, in the hemlocks,
Cocoons from the bark detaching.

But so soon as in the Maytime
Eggs are laid and young are hatching,
Berries, buds, and worms rejecting,
Turns this scourge to sweeter morsels ;
Woe awaits the early songster
Whose uncovered nest he chances
To discover as he's sneaking
Through the forest seeking plunder ;
Wise the nuthatch and the titmouse,
Wise the bluebird and the downy,
To conceal their nests in tree-trunks
Where this monster cannot find them ;
Ask the vireo what happens,
Ask the junco where her eggs are,
Ask the thrush and ask the robin
What assassin slew their young ones.

Hundreds perish in the season,
Egg and young of birds as useful
As their slayer is unfriendly
To the ways and plans of farmers.

Retribution sometimes follows
On the footsteps of this monster.
Crows will fly among the savins,
Search among the bristling branches,
Find the nests of roots and bark strips
Armed with barbs and twined with brambles,
Full of eggs or young just gaping —
Dainty morsels those for crows' tongues.
Harsh the clamor when the robber
Comes to find his own home wasted,
Wild the screams and fierce the anger,
Vain the flights around the nesting.
Man admires him for his feathers,
Loves to watch him in the winter
Bóldly fly among the poultry,
Snatching golden kernels from them,
But his peers alone can judge him
Justly, clearly, on his merits.
One and all they call him outlaw,
Hate him, loathe him, fear him, spurn him.

Be his plumage light and dainty
He is cousin to the raven,
Near of kin is he to Corvus,
Black his heart, and black his kindred,
False his colors, false his nature.
All his beauty is delusion,
All his tricks are tricks of darkness ;
Grim Chocorua through his cloud veil
Ever looks askance upon him.

RETURN OF THE GULLS

Far out upon the treeless sweep
Of sun-smit plain, there come
And go great flights of gulls.
In hot still noon, in roar of wind,
In mist of evening — or in cold clear dawn
They flit in easeful flight above the swash
Of uncut wheat, glittering like flakes
Of snow in flaming sunlight.

They are far from the sea —
How came they here, these children
Of the raw, salt winds of ocean ?

All day they wheel and dip
And rise again — complaining, calling
In querulous voices, calling, asking
For something lost.

In keen October dawns
They move in myriads, with the rolling sweep
Of foam-lined waves of water,
Close to the sod in search of food.

At night they settle upon the breast
Of little alkaline lakes and sit and swing
In the soft wash of the water,
And talk of things far off.
In the Winter they hasten South.

For ages they have journeyed thus,
Century by century, while the low land rose
And the water wasted — æons, and still
They came and went. Generations died,
But the young preserved the custom.
And now, though the land is hot
And the sea is sunk to an alkaline pool,
They come and come, because they bear
Within their faithful brains the habits
Of a thousand thousand years.

HAMLIN GARLAND.

THE SEA-GULL

Oh, had' I but thy wings when storms arise,
Gray spirit of the sea and of the shore !
When the wild waters round thee rave and roar,
Calm art thou 'neath the tumult of the skies.
Thy plume hath spanned the deep's immensities ;
Above her vast and ever-shifting floor
Thou, on thy gray wing roaming, still dost soar,
Forever drawn to where the distance lies.
From the dim sea's unknowable extreme
Thou comest, wandering through lone water-ways
To cliffs empurpled and cerulean bays ;
Then, rocking near some cavern's emerald gleam,
Thou seem'st the soul of halcyonian days —
The restful Spirit of the sea supreme.

At the Gates of Song. — LLOYD MIFFLIN.

THE EAGLE

An eagle in this lovely scene
Was perched upon a hillock green,
Where strew'd remains of bow and spear
With here and there a scattered bone,
Bared by the frost and rain, made known
An Indian burial-place was here.
And as he stood, his form stretch'd high,
And from his keen and martial eye
Glances around he shot,
He seem'd, within the halo-light
With ruffled plumes, and crown of white,
The monarch of the spot.

Balancing on his outspread wing,
At length he look'd as if to spring,
While higher arch'd his kingly neck ;
Rustled the leaves — and with a shriek
He swept up, pointing high his beak,
And dwindled to a fading speck.

The Indian's Vigil. — ALFRED BILLINGS STREET.

THE EAGLE

We touch the green marge ; hark ! a shriek shrill and
loud,
A bird with huge wings, like a fragment of cloud,
Shoots swift from the gorge, sweeps around, then on
high

Cleaves his way; till he seems a dim spot in the sky ;
Then stooping in circles, contracting his rings,
He swoops to a pine-top and settles his wings ;
An eagle ! an eagle ! how kingly his form !
He seems fit to revel in sunshine and storm ;
What terrible talons, what strength in that beak,
His red rolling eye-balls the proud monarch speak ;
He casts looks, superb and majestic, down ;
His pine for a throne, and his crest for a crown ;
He stirs not a feather, though shoutings arise,
But still flings beneath mute contempt at our cries ;
A branch is hurl'd upward, whirls near him, but vain,
He looks down his eloquent, glorious disdain,
Till he chooses to spread his broad pinions of gray
And launch in majestic, slow motion away.

A Visit to Mongaup Falls. — ALFRED BILLINGS STREET.

PARTRIDGES

Under the alders, along the brooks,
Under the hemlocks, along the hill,
Spreading their plumage with furtive looks,
Daintily pecking the leaves at will ;
Whir ! and they flit from the startled sight, —
And the forest is silent, the air is still.

Crushing the leaves 'neath our careless feet,
Snapping the twigs with a heavy tread,
Dreamy October is late and sweet,
And stooping we gather a blossom dead ;
Boom ! and our heart has a thunderous beat
As the gray apparition flits overhead.

Up from the path with a thunderous roar
That startles the dreamer amid his dreams,
Till he peers into vistas that open before
For the flash of the plumage with silver gleams :
Why, modest hermit, thus fearful of him
Who would share in the secrets of forests and streams?

I lie on the windrows of leaves and gaze
At thy innocent preening of serrate wing,
Or watch where the last crimson colors blaze,
And the red autumn leaves to the maple cling,
Too fond of this life myself, to destroy
The motion and life I am worshipping.

ALONZO TEALL WORDEN.

COOT SHOOTING

When late October's frosty breath
Blows over color'd woodlands gay ;
From the remotest Labrador,
From Baffin's and from Hudson's Bay,
The streaming migratory flocks
Of sable coot their journey urge,
Following the coast-line's devious sweep
To Florida's remotest verge.

Since earliest spring-time they have sought
The utmost northern isle and shoal ;
Their chosen haunt and breeding-ground,
In latitudes beneath the Pole.
The wild-geese and the brent-geese there
In swamps impervious build their nest

(So Northern fishermen declare),
Where none may reach them to molest.
But the shy coot-tribes o'er the sands
And reeds of rocky islands throng ;
There frame the nest and rear the young,
And linger all the summer long.

Off every jutting reef and point
Thrust seaward from New England's shore,
The wild-fowl shooters spread the sail
And vex the waters with the oar.
There, anchor'd in a curving line,
Two score of tossing boats extend,
Each fowler prompt with uprais'd gun
To thin the flocks, where'er they tend.
The old-wife, swiftest on the wing,
The shelldrake pied, and speckled loon,
Join in the ocean voyaging,
And flank each migrating platoon ;

Nor cease their sea-flights till the breeze
Of summer climates warms the seas.
In Massachusetts Bay, and far
Where Cape Cod spreads its yellow sand,
By every creek and cape of Maine,
River and estuary grand,
In Vineyard and Long Island Sound,
And by its southern ocean shore,
Their countless myriads are found,
Winging as far as billows pour.

By Jersey coast and Delaware Bay,
From Cape Charles to York River tides,
The black coot plies his dusky wing,
And o'er the tossing ocean glides.

By Gardiner's and by Shelter Isle,
Far out on sandy bar and shoal,
These swarming water-fowl disport
Wherever salty billows roll.
And where Peconic spreads its sheet
Engirdled by its hills of green,
The coot and whistlers find a haunt
In shelter'd reach and cove serene.

ISAAC McLELLAN.

FLOCKING OF THE BIRDS

October frosts have chilled the air,
And turned the leaves to gold and red ;
The birds are flocking here and there,
And wheeling swiftly overhead —
Dark-vestured swallows, lithe and strong,
And sparrows bold and finches gay,
And warblers making joyous song
As new-formed columns move away.

From broken fences, from the ground,
From trees and meadows, ev'rywhere,
We see them circle round and round,
And form their armies in the air ;
Dark, swaying lines that rise and fall

And cast long shadows on the grass,
And sharp and clear we hear the call
Of leaders as the columns pass.

And all about, the hills are crowned
With woods that seem to burn and glow,
And purple asters, from the ground,
Look up and watch the armies go ;
Long, swaying ranks of swallows strong,
And bobolinks, alert and gay,
And warblers, full of life and song —
All moving swiftly on their way.

And silently, among the trees,
The thrushes flock and disappear ;
We hear their notes upon the breeze,
And then — the singers are not here.
The autumn wanes, and kinglets go,
Sweet-voiced and knightly in their way,
And all the birds our summers know,
They flock and leave us day by day.

The autumn wanes, and days are cold,
The northern winds are sharp and keen,
Dull brown assumes the place of gold,
And dark and gloomy skies are seen ;
And yonder hawk, who fainter grows
Above the hills and grazing herds,
Is symbol of the season's close,
The last of the departing birds.

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRDS

Whither away, Robin,

Whither away?

Is it through envy of the maple-leaf,

Whose blushes mock the crimson of thy breast,

Thou wilt not stay?

The summer days were long, yet all too brief

The happy season thou hast been our guest :

Whither away?

Whither away, Bluebird,

Whither away?

The blast is chill, yet in the upper sky

Thou still canst find the color of thy wing,

The hue of May.

Warbler, why speed thy southern flight? ah, why,

Thou too, whose song first told us of the Spring?

Whither away?

Whither away, Swallow,

Whither away?

Canst thou no longer tarry in the North,

Here, where our roof so well hath screened thy nest?

Not one short day?

Wilt thou — as if thou human wert — go forth

And wanton far from them who love thee best?

Whither away?

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.



NOVEMBER

*Then stood we shivering in the night air cold,
And heard a sound as if a chariot rolled
Groaning adown the heavens. And lo ! o'erhead
Twice, thrice the wild geese cried ; then on they sped,
O'er field and wood and bay, toward Southern seas ;
So low they flew that on the forest trees
Their strong wind splashed a spray of moonlight white ;
So straight they flew, so fast their steady flight.
True as an arrow they sailed down the night ;
Like lights blown out they vanished from the sight.*

Anon.

*With mingled sound of horns and bells,
A far-heard clang, the wild geese fly,
Storm-sent, from Arctic moors and fells,
Like a great arrow through the sky,
Two dusky lines converged in one,
Chasing the Southward-flying sun ;
While the brave snow-bird and the hardy jay
Call to them from the pines, as if to bid them stay.*

The Last Walk in Autumn. — JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

*The robin and the wren are flown, and from the shrubs the jay,
And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day.*

The Death of the Flowers. — WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

THE BLUEBIRD

In the very spring,
Nay, in the bluster of March, or haply before,
The bluebird comes, and a-wing
Or alight, seems evermore
For song that is sweet and soft.
His footprints oft
Make fretwork along the snow
When the weather is bleak ablow,
When his hardihood by cold is pinched full sore.

Then deep in the fall,
In the Indian-summer while, in the dreamy days,
When the errant songsters all
Grow slack in songful ways,
You may hear his warble still
By field or hill ;
Until, with an azure rush
Of motion, music — hush !
He is off, he is mutely whelmed in the southern haze !

RICHARD BURTON.

A BAND OF BLUEBIRDS

(IN AUTUMN)

O happy band of bluebirds,
Brave prophets of the Spring,
Amid the tall and tufted cane,
How blithesomely you sing !

What message haunts your music
 'Mid Autumn's dusky reign?
You tell us Nature stores her seed
 To give them back in grain !

Your throats are gleeful fountains,
 Through which a song-tide flows ;
Your voices greet me in the woods,
 On every wind that blows !
I dream that Heaven invites you
 To bid the Earth "good-by :"
For in your wings you seem to hold
 A portion of the sky !

.

O happy band of bluebirds,
 You could not long remain
To flit across the fading fields
 And glorify the grain. . . .
You leave melodious memories,
 Whose sweetness thrills me through :
Ah, if my songs were such as yours,
 They'd almost touch the Blue !

WILLIAM H. HAYNE.

THE AUTUMN FLIGHT

From the strongholds of the North
When the Ice-King marches forth,
The southern lands to harry with his host,
The fowl with clang and cry
Come speeding through the sky,
And steering for the shelter on our coast.

I hear the swish and swing
Of the fleetly moving wing,
I see the forms drawn faintly 'gainst the sky,
As the rush of feathered legions
From out the frozen regions,
Sail onward 'neath the silent stars on high.

Like a cloud that's borne along
By a mighty wind, and strong,
Then parting, disappears in vapor light,
They glide o'er lake and sea,
O'er mountain, moor, and lea,
And passing swiftly vanish in the night.

They seek a sunny clime,
A land of blooms and thyme,
The tranquil surface round the Southern key ;
A home of peace and rest
On the friendly water's breast
Of lake or flowing river, or the murmuring sea,
The gently heaving bosom of the sea.

THE FLIGHT OF THE CANADA GEESE

Honk ! honk ! on stormy wings they cleave the upper air,
On gusty breeze, above the seas, their onward cohorts
fare ;

They come from frosty solitudes, where broods the
Arctic night,
Where deserts grim, spread vast and dim, in the auroral
light.

The Esquimaux, with bended bow, fast paddling his
canoe,
Their flocks hath chas'd o'er icy waste of waters heavenly
blue ;

On frozen shore of Labrador the Indian's steel hath sped,
But vain the shaft, and vain the craft, and vain the
fowler's lead.

In twinkling gleam of cold moonbeam, their dusky files
I trace,
In wedge-like throng, in column long, they speed the
tireless race ;

O'er craggy mountain-sides, and over torrent tides,
The shadow of each column in swift procession glides.

O'er the far-resounding surge, in the dim horizon's
verge,
I see their dark battalions on winnowing pinions urge ;
O'er Lake Superior's sheet their clanging pinions beat,
Where Western plain and golden grain spread sumptu-
ous pastures sweet.

The bleak November cloud casts down its snowy
shroud,
And the throbblings and the sobbings of the winds are
swelling loud ;



CANADA GOOSE

The snowdrift hides the grass, and the lakes are crystal
 glass,
So warn'd the geese-flock legions to gentler regions
 pass, —
To the balmy Southern clime, where the orange and the
 lime,
With blossom'd fruits, perennial shoots, are ever in their
 prime :
To paradise ambrosial, to banks of spic'd perfume,
Where forests wide and river-side are prodigal with
 bloom.

ISAAC MCLELLAN.

FLIGHT OF THE WILD GEESE

Rambling along the marshes,
On the bank of Assabet,
Sounding myself as to how it went,
Praying that I might not forget,
And all uncertain
Whether I was in the right,
Toiling to lift Time's curtain,
And if I burnt the strongest light ;
Suddenly,
High in the air,
I heard the travelled geese
Their overture prepare.

Stirred above the patent ball,
The wild geese flew,
Nor near so wild as that doth me befall,
Or, swollen Wisdom, you.

In the front there fetched a leader,
Him behind the line spread out,
And waved about,
As it was near night,
When these air-pilots stop their flight.

Cruising off the shoal dominion
Where we sit,
Depending not on their opinion,
Nor hiving sops of wit ;
Geographical in tact,
Naming not a pond or river,
Pulled with twilight down in fact,
In the reeds to quack and quiver,
There they go,
Spectators at the play below,
Southward in a row.

Cannot land and map the stars
The indifferent geese,
Nor taste the sweetmeats in odd jars,
Nor speculate and freeze ;
Rancid weasands need be well,
Feathers glossy, quills in order,
Starts this train, yet rings no bell ;
Steam is raised without recorder.

“Up, my feathered fowl, all,” —
Saith the goose commander,
“Brighten your bills, and flirt your pinions,
My toes are nipped, — let us render

Ourselves in soft Guatemala,
Or suck puddles in Campeachy,
Spitzbergen-cake cuts very frosty,
And the tipple is not leechy.

“Let’s brush loose for any creek,
There lurk fish and fly,
Condiments to fat the weak,
Inundate the pie.
Flutter not about a place,
Ye concomitants of space !”

Mute the listening nations stand
On that dark receding land ;
How faint their villages and towns,
Scattered on the misty downs !
A meeting-house
Appears no bigger than a mouse.

How long ?
Never is a question asked,
While a throat can lift the song,
Or a flapping wing be tasked.

All the grandmothers about
Hear the orators of Heaven,
Then put on their woolens stout,
And cower o’er the hearth at even ;
And the children stare at the sky,
And laugh to see the long black line so high !

Then once more I hear them say, —
“’Tis a smooth, delightful road,
Difficult to lose the way,
And a trifle for a load.”

’Twas our forte to pass for this,
Proper sack of sense to borrow,
Wings and legs, and bills that clatter,
And the horizon of To-morrow.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING, of Concord.

CANVAS-BACK AND RED-HEADS

In sharp November, from afar,
From Northern river, stream, and lake,
The flocks of noble canvas-back
Their migratory journeys make ;
The frosty morning finds them spread
Along the flats of Barnegat,
Where grows the Valisneria root,
The duck-grass with its russet thread ;
But chief where Chesapeake receives
From Susquehanna brackish tides.
By calm Potomac and the James,
Feeding at will from morn till eve,
’Mid those aquatic pastures green,
The ribbon’d grass and bulbous root,
Where slant the reedy edges lean.
By thousands there the wild-fowl come
To taste the rich, delicious fare ;
The red-head and the canvas-back,
The widgeon with his plumage rare ;

The ruddy duck, the buffle-head,
The broad-bill and Canadian goose,
Loving o'er placid shoal or cove
Their flapping pinions to unloose.
Through all the day, dispers'd around,
They swim and circle o'er the bay ;
At eve, in congregated flocks,
To mouths of creeks they take their way ;
While some a wakeful vigil keep,
Others at anchor float asleep.

When winter early sharp sets in,
And frozen is the river's face,
To its salt confluence with the bay
The flocks seek out their feeding-place.
And where across the ice a pool
Of open water they discern,
The hungry flocks their flight suspend
And toward the friendly pasture turn
And there the lurking gunner waits
(Amid the ice-blocks hid from sight),
With heavy gun and deadly aim
To thin the numbers that alight.

ISAAC McLELLAN.

CANVAS-BACK DUCK

The far-famed Canvas-backs at once we know,
Their broad, flat bodies wrapped in pencilled snow ;
The burnished chestnut o'er their necks that shone,
Spread deep'ning round each breast a sable zone.

The Foresters. — ALEXANDER WILSON.

MY AVIARY

Through my north window, in the wintry weather, —
My airy oriel on the river shore, —
I watch the sea-fowl as they flock together
Where late the boatman flashed his dripping oar.

The gull, high floating, like a sloop unladen,
Lets the loose water waft him as it will ;
The duck, round-breasted as a rustic maiden,
Paddles and plunges, busy, busy still.

I see the solemn gulls in council sitting
On some broad ice-floe pondering long and late,
While overhead the home-bound ducks are flitting,
And leave the tardy conclave in debate,

Those weighty questions in their breasts revolving
Whose deeper meaning science never learns,
Till at some reverend elder's look dissolving,
The speechless senate silently adjourns.

But when along the waves the shrill north-easter
Shrieks through the laboring coaster's shrouds, " Be-
ware ! "
The pale bird, kindling like a Christmas feaster
When some wild chorus shakes the vinous air,

Flaps from the leaden wave in fierce rejoicing,
Feels heaven's dumb lightning thrill his torpid
nerves,

Now on the blast his whistling plumage poising,
Now wheeling, whirling in fantastic curves.

Such is our gull ; a gentleman of leisure,
Less fleshed than feathered ; bagged you'll find him
such ;
His virtue silence ; his employment pleasure ;
Not bad to look at, and not good for much.

What of our duck ? He has some high-bred cousins, —
His Grace the Canvas-back, My Lord the Brant, —
Anas and *Anser*, — both served up by dozens,
At Boston's *Rocher*, half-way to Nahant.

As for himself, he seems alert and thriving, —
Grubs up a living somehow — what, who knows ?
Crabs ? mussels ? weeds ? — Look quick ! there's one
just diving !
Flop ! Splash ! his white breast glistens — down he
goes !

And while he's under — just about a minute —
I take advantage of the fact to say
His fishy carcass has no virtue in it
The gunning idiot's worthless hire to pay.

He knows you ! “sportsmen” from suburban alleys,
Stretched under seaweed in the treacherous punt ;
Knows every lazy, shiftless lout that sallies
Forth to waste powder — as *he* says, to “hunt.”

I watch you with a patient satisfaction,
Well pleased to discount your predestined luck ;
The float that figures in your sly transaction
Will carry back a goose, but not a duck.

Shrewd is our bird ; not easy to outwit him !
Sharp is the outlook of those pin-head eyes ;
Still, he is mortal, and a shot may hit him ;
One cannot always miss him if he tries.

Look ! there's a young one, dreaming not of danger ;
Sees a flat log come floating down the stream ;
Stares undismayed upon the harmless stranger ;
Ah ! were all strangers harmless as they seem !

Habet ! a leaden shower his breast has shattered ;
Vainly he flutters, not again to rise ;
His soft white plumes along the waves are scattered ;
Helpless the wing that braved the tempest lies.

He sees his comrades high above him flying
To seek their nests among the island reeds ;
Strong is their flight ; all lonely he is lying
Washed by the crimsoned water as he bleeds.

O Thou who carest for the falling sparrow,
Canst Thou the sinless sufferer's pang forget ?
Or is thy dread account-book's page so narrow
It's one long column scores thy creatures' debt ?

Poor gentle guest, by nature kindly cherished,
A world grows dark with thee in blinding death ;
One little gasp — thy universe has perished,
Wrecked by the idle thief who stole thy breath !

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

THE KITTIWAKES

Like white feathers blown about the rocks,
Like soft snowflakes wavering in the air,
Wheel the Kittiwakes in scattered flocks,
Crying, floating, fluttering everywhere.

Shapes of snow and cloud, they soar and whirl :
Downy breasts that shine like lilies white ;
Delicate vaporous tints of gray and pearl
Laid upon their arching wings so light.

Eyes of jet and beaks and feet of gold, —
Lovelier creatures never sailed in air ;
Innocent, inquisitive, and bold,
Knowing not the dangers that they dare.

Stooping now above a beckoning hand,
Following gleams of waving kerchiefs white,
What should they of evil understand,
Though the gun awaits them full in sight ?

Though their blood the quiet wave makes red,
Though their broken plumes float far and wide,
Still they linger, hovering overhead,
Still the gun deals death on every side.

Oh, begone, sweet birds, or higher soar !
See you not your comrades low are laid ?
But they only flit and call the more, —
Ignorant, unconscious, undismayed.

Nay then, boatmen, spare them ! Must they bear
Pangs like those for human vanity ?
That their lovely plumage we may wear
Must these fair, pathetic creatures die ?

Let the tawny squaws themselves admire,
Decked with feathers, — we can wiser be.
I beseech you, boatmen, do not fire !
Stain no more with blood the tranquil sea.

CELIA THAXTER.

WINTER

*Thou singest alone on the bare wintry bough,
As if Spring, with its leaves, were around thee now ;
And its voice, that was heard in the laughing rill,
And the breeze, as it whispered o'er meadow and hill,
Still fell on thine ear, as it murmured along
To join the sweet tide of thine own gushing song.
Sing on, though its sweetness was lost on the blast,
And the storm has not heeded thy song as it passed ;
Yet its music awoke, in a heart that was near,
A thought, whose remembrance will ever prove dear ;
Though the brook may be frozen, though silent its voice,
And the gales through the meadows no longer rejoice,
Still I felt, as my ear caught thy glad note of glee,
That my heart in life's winter might carol like thee.*

The Winter Bird. — JONES VERY.



December.



DECEMBER

*In the birches, on the grasses
Stiffly rising through the snow crust,
On the slope of yonder sand-bank
Where the snow has slipped and wasted,
Rest a flock of trustful strangers,
Lisping words of gentle greeting,
Rest and find the sun's rays warming,
Rest and find their food abundant,
Resting, sing of weary journeys
From a Northland cold and distant.*

The Red-Poll Linnet. — FRANK BOLLES.

*I hear no more the robin's summer song
Through the gray network of the wintry woods :
Only the cawing crows that all day long
Clamor about the windy solitudes.*

December. — CHRISTOPHER P. CRANCH.

WINTER COMRADES

Plume and go, ye summer folk ;
Fly from Winter's killing stroke,
Bluebird, sparrow, thrush, and swallow,
Wild geese from the marshes follow,
Wood-dove from the lonesome hollow,
Rise, and follow South — all follow !

Now I greet ye, hardy tribes,
Snowy owl, and night-black crow
Startling with your wild halloo ;
Blue-jay screaming like the wind,
In the tree-tops gaunt and thinned ;
You in Summer called " Bob-white "
(Voice of far-off fields' delight) ,
Now among the barn-yard brood
Fearless searching for your food ;
Nuthatch, snowbird, chickadee,
Downy tapper on the tree ;
And you twittering goldfinch drove
(Masked in gray), that blithely rove
Where the herby pastures show
Tables set above the snow ;
And ye other flocks that ramble
Where the red hip trims the bramble,
Or the rowan berry bright
And the scarlet haw invite —
Winter comrades, well betide ye,
Friendly trunk and hollow hide ye,
Hemlock branches interlace,
When the Northern blast gives chase.

THE NEST¹

PALINODE — DECEMBER

Like some lorn abbey now, the wood
Stands roofless in the bitter air ;
In ruins on its floor is strewed
The carven foliage quaint and rare,
And homeless winds complain along
The columned choir once thrilled with song.

And thou, dear nest, whence joy and praise
The thankful oriole used to pour,
Swing'st empty while the north winds chase
Their snowy swarms from Labrador :
But, loyal to the happy past,
I love thee still for what thou wast.

Ah, when the Summer graces flee
From other nests more dear than thou,
And, where June crowded once, I see
Only bare trunk and disleaved bough ;
When springs of life that gleamed and gushed
Run chilled, and slower, and are hushed ;

When our own branches, naked long,
The vacant nests of Spring betray,
Nurseries of passion, love, and song
That vanished as our year grew gray ;
When Life drones o'er a tale twice told
O'er embers pleading with the cold, —

¹ Part first will be found in its appropriate month (May).



BARRED OWL

I'll trust that, like the birds of Spring,
Our good goes not without repair,
But only flies to soar and sing
Far off in some diviner air,
Where we shall find it in the calms
Of that fair garden 'neath the palms.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

TO THE OWL

Grave, pensive, musing, solitary bird,
Who lov'st to woo the lone and silent night,
By thee to all the joys of day preferr'd,
And maugre coxcomb birds who love the light ;

Witlings have said — but ignorance will prate —
Thou lovest darkness, and the light dost shun
Because thy deeds are evil, and dost hate
The all-pervading influence of the sun :

Let such thy solemn gait and look despise,
Their mirth is folly and their laughter mad ;
For *Pallas*, Goddess chaste, discreet, and wise,
Gave thee that sober air and visage sad :

'Tis true, thy hooting does not please the ear,
But thou, perhaps, art moralizing now ;
And man delights not moral truth to hear,
Or from the pulpit or dismantled bough :

From that age-blighted bough thou seemest to cry
" O turn at my reproof, ye sons of men ;
Why scorn ye Virtue, creatures born to die ?
And when will ye be truly wise, ah ! when ?

" 'Tis better to the house of grief to go,
Than pleasure's court, on luxuries to feast ;
Far better to be mov'd at human woe,
Than gorge your sensual cravings like a beast."

Bird of *Minerva* ! denizen of night !
Oft, when the shades of eve begin to fall,
Will I retire from Pleasure's meteor light,
To see thee perch'd on yonder ruin'd wall ;

There, where the ivy and the night-shade climb,
Amid the waste a thousand years have made,
We'll gather wisdom from the wreck of time, —
Or, wrapp'd in Contemplation's awful shade,

Where some old temple lifts its form sublime,
'Midst Death's drear spoils and many a mould'ring
tomb,
We there will pass beyond the bourn of time,
And meditate on man's eternal doom :

And when I tread the consecrated aisle,
And hear thee pour thy melancholy scream,
I'll ponder on my destiny the while ;
The world of spirits shall be all my theme !

OWL AGAINST ROBIN

Frowning, the owl in the oak complained him
Sore, that the song of the robin restrained him
Wrongly of slumber, rudely of rest.

“ From the north, from the east, from the south and the
west,

Woodland, wheat-field, corn-field, clover,
Over and over and over and over,
Five o'clock, ten o'clock, twelve, or seven,
Nothing but robin-songs heard under heaven :
How can we sleep ?

“ *Peep !* you whistle, and *cheep ! cheep ! cheep !*
Oh, peep if you will, and buy, if 'tis cheap,
And have done ; for an owl must sleep.
Are ye singing for fame, and who shall be first ?
Each day's the same, yet the last is worst,
And the summer is cursed with the silly outburst
Of idiot red-breasts peeping and cheeping
By day, when all honest birds ought to be sleeping.
Lord, what a din ! And so out of reason.
Have ye not heard that each thing hath its season ?
Night is to work in, night is for play-time !
Good heavens, not day-time !

“ A vulgar flaunt is the flaring day,
The impudent, hot, unsparing day,
That leaves not a stain nor a secret untold,—
Day the reporter, — the gossip of old, —
Deformity's tease, — man's common scold —

Poh ! Shut the eyes, let the sense go numb
When day down the eastern way has come.
'Tis clear as the moon (by the argument drawn
From Design) that the world should retire at dawn.
Day kills. The leaf and the laborer breathe
Death in the sun, the cities seethe,
The mortal black marshes bubble with heat
And puff up pestilence : nothing is sweet
Has to do with the sun : even virtue will taint
(Philosophers say) and manhood grow faint
In the lands where the villanous sun has sway
Through the livelong drag of the dreadful day.
What Eden but noon-light stares it tame,
Shadowless, brazen, forsaken of shame?
For the sun tells lies on the landscape, — now
Reports me the *what*, unrelieved with the *how*,—
As messengers lie, with the facts alone,
Delivering the word and withholding the tone.

“ But oh, the sweetness, and oh, the light
Of the high-fastidious night !
Oh, to awake with the wise old stars —
The cultured, the careful, the Chesterfield stars —
That wink at the work-a-day fact of crime
And shine so rich through the ruins of time
That Baalbec is finer than London : oh,
To sit on the bough that zigzags low
 By the woodland pool,
And loudly laugh at man, the fool

That vows to the vulgar sun ; oh, rare,
To wheel from the wood to the window where
A day-worn sleeper is dreaming of care,
And perch on the sill and straightly stare
Through his visions ; rare, to sail
Aslant with the hill and a-curve with the vale, —
To flit down the shadow-shot-with-gleam,
Between hanging leaves and starlit stream,
Hither, thither, to and fro,
Silent, aimless, dayless, slow,
(*Aimless ? Field-mice ?* True they're slain,
But the night-philosophy hoots at pain,
Grips, eats quick, and drops the bones
In the water beneath the bough, nor moans
At the death life feeds on.) Robin, pray
Come away, come away
To the cultus of night. Abandon the day.
Have more to think and have less to say.
And cannot you walk now ? Bah ! don't hop !
Stop !
Look at the owl, scarce seen, scarce heard,
O irritant, iterant, maddening bird ! ”

Owl against Robin. — SIDNEY LANIER.

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THE EARLY OWL

An owl once lived in a hollow tree,
And he was as wise as wise could be.
The branch of learning he didn't know
Could scarce on the tree of knowledge grow,
He knew the tree from branch to root,
And an owl like that can afford to hoot.

And he hooted — until, alas ! one day,
He chanced to hear, in a casual way,
An insignificant little bird
Make use of a term he had never heard.
He was flying to bed in the dawning light
When he heard her singing with all her might,
“ Hurray ! hurray ! for the early worm ! ”
“ Dear me,” said the owl, “ what a singular term !
I would look it up if it weren't so late,
I must rise at dusk to investigate.
Early to bed and early to rise
Makes an owl healthy, and stealthy, and wise ! ”

So he slept like an honest owl all day,
And rose in the early twilight gray,
And went to work in the dusky light
To look for the early worm at night.

He searched the country for miles around,
But the early worm was not to be found ;

So he went to bed in the dawning light
And looked for the "worm" again next night.
And again and again, and again and again,
He sought and he sought, but all in vain,
Till he must have looked for a year and a day
For the early worm in the twilight gray.

At last in despair he gave up the search,
And was heard to remark as he sat on his perch
By the side of his nest in the hollow tree :
"The thing is as plain as night to me —
Nothing can shake my conviction firm.
There's no such thing as the early worm."

OLIVER HERFORD.

WHAT SEES THE OWL

His velvet wing sweeps through the night :
With magic of his wondrous sight
He oversees his vast domain,
And king supreme of night doth reign.

Around him lies a silent world,
The day with all its noise is furled ;
When every shadow seems a moon,
And every light a sun at noon.

How welcome from the blinding glare
Is the cool grayness of the air !
How sweet the power to reign, a king,
When day his banishment will bring !

For him the colorless moonlight
Burns brilliant, an aurora bright ;
The forest's deepest gloom stands clear
From mystery and helpless fear.

He sees the silver cobwebs spun,
The dewdrops set the flowers have won,
The firefly's gleam offends his sight,
It seems a spark of fierce sunlight.

Clear winter nights when he so bold,
" For all his feathers, 'is a-cold,"
Sees the Frost-spirit fling his lace,
And fashion icicles apace.

At his weird call afar and faint
A sleepy echo, like the quaint
Last notes of some wild chant, replies
And mocks his solitude — and dies.

What Sees the Owl.—ELIZABETH SEARS BATES.

Overland Monthly Pub. Co.

THE OWL

And then with awe
They walked 'round Noey's big pet owl, and saw
Him film his great, clear, liquid eyes and stare
And turn and turn his head 'round there
The same way they kept circling — as though he
Could turn it one way thus eternally.

A Child World.—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.

THE OWL

The owl, belated in his plundering,
Shall here await the friendly night,
Blinking whene'er he wakes, and wondering
What fool it was invented light.

On Planting a Tree at Inveraray.—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

A hornèd owl on silent wings,
From out a cavernous place;
Speeds, like a bolt of darkness hurled
Athwart the shining space
Above the vale from wood to wood,
And leaves no trace behind,—
Like some dark fancy flung across
A pure and peaceful mind !

At Night.—MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE LOG-COCK

Only in primeval forests,
Only where the mighty hemlocks
Skyward lift their storm-bent branches,
Will you find the log-cock toiling,
Will you hear his shriek appalling,
Will you see his flame crest gleaming.
In the early winter mornings,
Ere the crossbills leave the pine woods,
Ere the grosbeaks seek the ash seeds,

Ere the red-polls find the birch buds,
Ere the titmouse calls his Phœbe ;
While the red fox still is prowling,
While the partridge still is budding,
Just before the sun comes stealing
Upwards from the Bearcamp meadows,
You may hear the log-cock working
In the glens below Chocorua,
In the forests north of Paugus,
On the slopes of Passaconway.
Hammer blows on hollow tree-trunks,
Blows which echo from the mountains,
Strikes he with his nervous chisel.
Chips are flying all around him,
Chips are piling high below him,
Still his blows fall fast and earnest,
Still the cliffs and woods repeat them.
If with fox feet you approach him,
If with scant breath you discern him,
In this early winter morning
As he toils with noisy rappings,
You will see his claws embedded
In the hemlock's outer fibre,
You will see his glossy plumage
Dark against the snowy hillside,
You will see his head thrown backward,
Then with spiteful force flung forward,
You will see the fresh chips flying,
You will hear the tree complaining.

If you crush the crust beneath you,
If his glance chance to be towards you,
You will see the flame crest lifted,
You will see his eye flash anger,
You will hear a shriek so vengeful,
In your dreams will come its echo.
Then the log-cock will have vanished,
And the ants within the hemlock
Will escape his morning drilling.

Chocorua's Tenants.—FRANK BOLLES.

THE WINTER ROBIN

Now is that sad time of year,
When no flower or leaf is here ;
When in misty southern ways
Oriole and jay have flown,
And of all sweet birds, alone
The Robin stays.

So give thanks at Christmas-tide ;
Hopes of springtime yet abide !
See, in spite of darksome days,
Wind and rain and bitter chill
Snow, and sleet-hung branches, still
The Robin stays !

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.



JANUARY.



JANUARY

*When the leaves are shed,
And the branches bare,
When the snows are deep,
And the flowers asleep,
And the Autumn dead ;
And the skies are o'er us bent,
Gray and gloomy since she went,
And the sifting snow is drifting
Through the air ;*

*Then 'mid snowdrifts white,
Though the trees are bare,
Comes the snowbird, bold
In the Winter's cold,
Quick and round and bright,
Light he steps across the snow,
Cares he not for winds that blow,
Though the sifting snow be drifting
Through the air.*

The Snowbird. — DORA READ GOODALE.

*Better far, ah, yes ! than no bird
Is the ever-present snowbird ;
Gayly tripping, dainty creature,
Where the snow hides every feature ;
Covers fences, field, and tree,
Clothes in white all things but thee :
Restless, twittering, trusty snowbird,
Lighter heart than thine has no bird.*

Snowbird. — CHARLES C. ABBOTT.

SNOWBIRDS

Along the narrow sandy height
I watch them swiftly come and go,
Or round the leafless wood,
Like flurries of wind-driven snow,
Revolving in perpetual flight,
A changing multitude.

Nearer and nearer still they sway,
And, scattering in a circled sweep,
Rush down without a sound ;
And now I see them peer and peep,
Across yon level bleak and gray,
Searching the frozen ground, —

Until a little wind upheaves,
And makes a sudden rustling there,
And then they drop their play,
Flash up into the sunless air,
And like a flight of silver leaves
Swirl round and sweep away.

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

MY APPLE-TREE

In Winter time the woodpecker,
Makes in those boughs his tiny stir,
The little tap of busy bill
The signal of his work and skill ;
With sober coat and spark of red
Cresting his smooth, obsequious head,
He seems in eager haste to be
Inspecting that old apple-tree.
There the neat snowbird in the sun
Sits when his frugal meal is done ;
For him those pale and scanty rays
Have the kind charm of Summer days.
His slaty coat and snowy breast,
Like some old Friend for meeting dressed.
His aspect trim, and short black ¹ beak ;
His shining eye, severely meek ;
His bold, familiar, close advance,
With sidewise head and sidelong glance,
Delight mine eye when cold winds blow.
I love him, but he brings the snow.

Here when the Spring begins to call,
The sparrow sings his madrigal ;
Through sleet and hail, in shine or rain,
I hear him o'er and o'er again :
" Resilio ! silio ! silio ! sil ! "
He warbles with such cheery will,

¹ The bill of snowbird, or junco, is flesh-color.

I bless the sweet, persistent song,
 And wish my courage were as strong.
 On him the bluebird follows fast.
 His whistle too defies the blast,
 His bosom red and mantle blue
 With the first South Wind's breath are due.
 He brings the blossoms hope and cheer
 As deep in dust his song they hear.
 Then the fat robin bends the boughs,
 Prospecting for his summer house ;
 So red and round, he seems to be
 Himself an apple on the tree.
 With plaintive song he prophesies
 Long days of rain, though bright the skies ;
 And when the sun returns once more
 He sings yet louder than before,
 Struts on the fence, chirps sharp and loud,
 By no insulting rival cowed,
 With dauntless heart and ready wing,
 To flout a rival or to sing.

.

Then tiny warblers flit and sing,
 With golden spots on crest and wing,
 Or, decked with scarlet *epaulette*,
 Above each dusky winglet set,
 They hunt the blossoms for their prey
 And pipe their fairy roundelay.
 The crimson finch, with whirr and trill
 Painted like sunsets, red and chill,
 Perched in a knot of blossoms pale,
 Nods his quick head and flirts his tail,

And calls his sober-suited spouse
To dinner in the fragrant boughs.
Before him tribes shall disappear
That threat the promise of the year ;
And then awhile he gives them rest,
To build his warm and secret nest.
The goldfinch, social, chirping, bright,
Takes in those branches his delight.
A troop like flying sunbeams pass
And light among the vivid grass,
Or on the end of some long branch,
Light acrobats, in air they launch,
And in the wild wind sway and swing,
Intent to twitter, glance, and sing ;
Till overhead the oriole
Pours out the passion of his soul,
A wingèd flame that darts and burns
Dazzling where'er his bright wing turns,
Yet fierce to scold, to rout, to flight,
Battle with peers his chief delight,
And many a song of victory
Awakes and thrills the apple tree !

But summer brings these branches peace,
The song and strife of Spring-time cease ;
Their homes are built, each feathered breast
Is busied with its little nest.
Careless of praise, secure of food,
They keep the Father's promise good,
And preach their tender homily
Of hope and love and trust, to me.

THE TITMOUSE

When piped a tiny voice hard by,
Gay and polite, a cheerful cry,
Chic-chicadeedee ! saucy note
Out of sound heart and merry throat,
As if it said, " Good-day, good sir !
Fine afternoon, old passenger !
Happy to meet you in these places,
Where January brings few faces."

This poet, though he live apart,
Moved by his hospitable heart,
Sped, when I passed his sylvan fort,
To do the honors of his court,
As fits a feathered lord of land,
Flew near, with soft wing grazed my hand,
Hopped on the bough, then darting low,
Prints his small impress on the snow,
Shows feats of his gymnastic play,
Head downward, clinging to the spray.

Here was this atom in full breath,
Hurling defiance at vast death ;
This scrap of valor just for play
Fronts the north wind in waistcoat gray,
As if to shame my weak behavior ;
I greeted loud my little savior,
" You pet ! what dost here ? and what for ?
In these woods, my small Labrador,
At this pinch, wee San Salvador !

What fire burns in that little chest
So frolic, stout, and self-possessed?
Henceforth I wear no stripe but thine ;
Ashes and jet all hues outshine.
Why are not diamonds black and gray,
To ape thy dare-devil array?
And I affirm, the spacious North
Exists to draw thy virtue forth.
I think no virtue goes with size ;
The reason of all cowardice
Is, that men are overgrown,
And to be valiant, must come down
To the titmouse dimension ! ”

’Tis good-will makes intelligence,
And I began to catch the sense
Of my bird’s song : “ Live out of doors
In the great woods, on prairie floors.
I dine in the sun ; when he sinks in the sea,
I too have a hole in a hollow tree ;
And I like less when summer beats
With stifling beams on these retreats,
Than noontide twilights which snow makes
With tempest of the blinding flakes.
For well the soul, if stout within,
Can arm impregnably the skin ;
And polar frost my frame defied,
Made of the air that blows outside.”

With glad remembrance of my debt,
I homeward turn ; farewell, my pet !
When here again thy pilgrim comes,
He shall bring store of seeds and crumbs.
Doubt not, so long as earth has bread,
Thou first and foremost shall be fed :
The Providence that is most large
Takes hearts like thine in special charge,
Helps who for their own need are strong,
And the sky doats on cheerful song.
Henceforth I prize thy wiry chant
O'er all that mass and minster vaunt ;
For men mis-hear thy call in spring,
As 'twould accost some frivolous wing,
Crying out of the hazel-copse, Phœ-be !
And, in winter, Chic-a-dee-dee !
I think old Cæsar must have heard
In northern Gaul my dauntless bird,
And, echoed in some frosty wold,
Borrowed thy battle-numbers bold,
And I will write our annals new,
And thank thee for a better clew,
I, who dreamed not when I came here
To find the antidote of fear,
Now hear thee say in Roman key,
Pæan ! Veni, vidi, vici.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

THE CHICKADEE

Thou little blackcap, chirping at my door,
And then saluting with thy gentle song
Or lonely whistle my attentive ear
A hearty welcome would I give to thee,
Thou teacher blest of quietness and peace ;
Sweet minister of love, for hearts awake
To the rare minstrelsy of field and wood.
Thou constant friend ! I hail thee with delight,
Who at this season of rude winter's reign,
When all the cheerful summer birds are fled,
Dost still remain to cheer the heart of man !
And though in numbers few thy song is given,
Two tranquil notes alone thy fullest song,
Yet scarcely when the joyous year brings back
The swelling choir of various notes once more,
Have I found deeper or more welcome strains.
For when all nature glows with life again,
When hills and dales put on their vernal gear,
When gentle wild flowers burst upon our gaze,
With all the exultation of the year,
Our souls unequal to the heavenly boon
Are often overwhelmed, and in the attempt
To enjoy it all droop listless and confused :
But in the dearth of these sweet sights and sounds
This grand display of God's enriching power,
The trees all bare and nature's russet stole
Thrown o'er the landscape, dull must be the heart,
Ingrate to Him who rules the perfect year,
That is not gladdened by thy gentle song.



CHICKADEE

THE BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

"Chic-chickadee dee !" I saucily say ;
My heart it is sound, my throat it is gay !
Every one that I meet I merrily greet
With a chickadee dee, chickadee dee !
To cheer and to cherish, on roadside and street,
My cap was made jaunty, my note was made sweet.

Chickadeedee, chickadeedee !
No bird of the winter so merry and free ;
Yet sad is my heart, though my song one of glee,
For my mate ne'er shall hear my chickadeedee.

I "chickadeedee" in forest and glade,
"Day, day, day !" to the sweet country maid ;
From autumn to spring-time I utter my song
Of chickadeedee all the day long !
The silence of winter my note breaks in twain,
And I "chickadeedee" in sunshine and rain.

Chickadeedee, chickadeedee !
No bird of the winter so merry and free ;
Yet sad is my heart, though my song one of glee,
For my mate ne'er shall hear my chickadeedee.

CHARLES C. MARBLE.

I tarried a bit
As a crested tit
Whistled his call so cheery,
It seemed a tune
In leafy June
Sung by a nesting veery.

Crested Tit. — CHARLES C. ABBOTT.



FEBRUARY

*No more the robin pipes his lay
To greet the flushed advance of morn ;
He sings in valleys far away ;
His heart is with the South to-day :
He cannot shrill among the corn.*

*For all the hay and corn are down
And garnered ; and the withered leaf,
Against the branches bare and brown,
Rattles ; and all the days are brief.*

Winter Days. — HENRY ABBEY.

IN CAPTIVITY

You ask me why
I long to fly
Out from your palace to the dreamy woods
And the summer solitudes,
Why I pine
In this cage of mine,
Why I fret,
Why I set
All manner of querulous echoes fluttering forth
From the cold North
And wandering Southward with beseeching pain
In every strain.

Ask me not,
Task me not
With such vain questions, but fling wide the door,
And hinder me no more ;
Give back my wings to me,
And the wild currents of my liberty !

I pant,
I faint ;
I die
For the trees so high
And the broad fields of luscious cane
And the grassy plain
And the red-tiled villages so old and dull,
Where (through the unkempt gardens rung)
The timbre of the Creole tongue
Makes every close so beautiful.

Oh, if you please,
Give me release !
Open the gate
Of this cage of Fate

And let me mount the south wind and go down
To Bay Saint Louis town,
Where the brown bees hum
In amber mists of pollen and perfume ;
And the roses gush abloom !

There in the oleander groves,
With drooping wings my dear mate moves
And wonders why I stay
So long, so long away,
While the spring in fervid prime
Has waxed to nesting time,
And the air once more, in pungent ecstasy,
Whirls the wasp and butterfly,
Flings the orange petals high,
And wrings a racy thrill from every tree !

.
I long to be once more
On the warm Gulf shore,
In the dark magnolia foliage hidden quite,
With the foam-capped waves in sight,
And the vessels, wing by wing,
Gleaming and wavering
On the far horizon line,
And the sun, right overhead,
Flaring red,
And flooding with flame divine
The deep blue hollow of the sky,
And gilding the vagrant gulf-caps gloriously.

Oh, the shimmer and the sheen
On the bay and the myrtle green !
Oh, the keen bouquet
From the wax-berry fruit !
Oh, wafts that stray
O'er vines all wine from top to root !
Oh, the dull red gold in the lemon tree !
Oh, open the cage and let me go !

Free me or I die,
Give me sweet liberty,
Whose every pulse was mine so long ago,
Down by the sea.
I feel,— I feel so faint, my heart beats low,
My throat is dry and harsh —
Oh, give me back my thicket by the marsh !
Let me see the herons wade
In the watery glade,
And let me see the water-fowl go by
Glimmering against the sky.

Fainter, fainter — so,
My life-stream sinks — runs low.
Oh !
Oh !
Open the cage and let me go,
Floating, dreaming, revelling, dying, down
To my mate, my queen, my love
In the fragrant, drowsy grove
Beyond the flowery closes of Bay Saint Louis town.

MAURICE THOMPSON.

THE CAGED BIRD

I know what the caged bird feels, alas !

When the sun is bright on the upland slopes ;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass ;

When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals, —
I know what the caged bird feels !

I know why the caged bird beats his wing

Till its blood is red on the cruel bars :
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing ;

And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars,
And they pulse again with a keener sting, —
I know why he beats his wing !

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me !

When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore —
When he beats his bars and he would be free ;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,

But a prayer he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to heaven he flings,—
I know why the caged bird sings !

Sympathy. — PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR.

CAPTIVE

The Summer comes, the Summer dies,
Red leaves whirl idly from the tree,
But no more cleaving of the skies,
No southward sunshine waits for me !

You shut me in a gilded cage,
You deck the bars with tropic flowers,
Nor know that freedom's living rage
Defies you through the listless hours.

What passion fierce, what service true,
Could ever such a wrong requite?
What gift, or clasp, or kiss from you
Were worth an hour of soaring flight?

I beat my wings against the wire,
I pant my trammelled heart away;
The fever of one mad desire
Burns and consumes me all the day.

What care I for your tedious love,
For tender word or fond caress?
I die for one free flight above,
One rapture of the wilderness!

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

TO A CAPTIVE OWL

I should be dumb before thee, feathered sage!
And gaze upon thy phiz with solemn awe,
But for a most audacious wish to gauge
The hoarded wisdom of thy learned craw.

Art thou, grave bird! so wondrous wise indeed?
Speak freely, without fear of jest or gibe —
What is thy moral and religious creed?
And what the metaphysics of thy tribe?

A poet, curious in birds and brutes,
I do not question thee in idle play ;
What is thy station? What are thy pursuits?
Doubtless thou hast thy pleasures — what are *they*?

Or is't thy wont to muse and mouse at once,
Entice thy prey with airs of meditation,
And with the unvarying habits of a dunce,
To dine in solemn depths of contemplation?

There may be much — the world at least says so —
Behind that ponderous brow and thoughtful gaze ;
Yet such a great philosopher should know,
It is by no means wise to think always.

And, Bird, despite thy meditative air,
I hold thy stock of wit but paltry pelf —
Thou show'st that same grave aspect everywhere,
And wouldst look thoughtful stuffed, upon a shelf.

I grieve to be so plain, renown'd Bird —
Thy flame's a flam, and thou an empty fowl ;
And what is more, upon a Poet's word
I'd say as much, wert thou Minerva's owl. •

So doff th' imposture of those heavy brows ;
They do not serve to hide thy instincts base —
And if thou must be sometimes munching *mouse*,
Munch it, O Owl ! with less profound a face.

HENRY TIMROD.

THE TAMED EAGLE

He sat upon his humble perch, nor flew
As I came nigh ;
But when I nearer drew
Looked, as I fancied, with reproachful eye
And sadly too.

And something spoke his native pride untamed
Despite his woe ;
Which, when I marked — ashamed
To see a noble creature brought so low —
My heart exclaimed, —

Where is the fire that lit thy fearless eye,
Child of the storm,
When from thy home on high,
Yon craggy-breasted rock, I saw thy form
Cleaving the sky?

I grieve to see thy dauntless spirit tamed,
Gone out the light
That in thine eye-ball flamed,
When to the mid-day sun thy steady flight
Was proudly aimed !

Like a young dove forsaken is the look
Of thy sad eye,
Who in some lonely nook
Mourns on the willow bough her destiny
Beside the brook.

O, let me not insult thy fallen dignity,
 Thou monarch bird,
 Gazing with vulgar eye
Upon thy ruin ; for my heart is stirred
 To hear thy cry !

Yet something sterner in thy downward gaze
 Doth seem to lower,
 And deep disdain betrays,
As if thou cursed man's poorly acted power
 And scorned his praise.

ANNA MARIA WELLS.

THE SNOW-FILLED NEST

It swings upon the leafless tree,
By stormy winds blown to and fro ;
Deserted, lonely, sad to see,
 And full of cruel snow.

In Summer's noon the leaves above
Made dewy shelter from the heat ;
The nest was full of life and love ;
 Ah, life and love are sweet !

The tender brooding of the day,
The silent, peaceful dreams of night,
The joys that patience overpay,
 The cry of young delight,

The song that through the branches rings,
The nestling crowd with eager eyes,

The flutter soft of untried wings,
The flight of glad surprise, —

All, all are gone ! I know not where ;
And still upon the cold, gray tree,
Lonely, and tossed by every air,
That snow-filled nest I see.

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

A DEAD BIRD IN WINTER

The cold, hard sky and hidden sun,
The stiffened trees that shiver so,
With bare twigs naked every one
To these harsh winds that freeze the snow,

It was a bitter place to die,
Poor birdie ! Was it easier then,
On such a world to shut thine eye,
And sleep away from life, than when

The apple-blossoms tint the air,
And, twittering in the sunny trees,
Thy fellow-songsters flit and pair,
Breasting the warm, caressing breeze ?

Nay, it were easier, I feel,
Though 'twere a brighter Earth to lose,
To let the summer shadows steal
About thee, bringing their repose ;

When the noon hush was on the air,
And on the flowers the warm sun shined,
And Earth seemed all so sweet and fair,
That He who made it must be kind.

So I, too, could not bear to go
From Life in this unfriendly clime,
To lie beneath the crusted snow,
When the dead grass stands stiff with rime !

But under those blue skies of home,
Far easier were it to lie down
Where the perpetual violets bloom,
And the rich moss grows never brown ;

Where linnets never cease to build
Their nests, in boughs that always wave
To odorous airs, with blessings filled
From nestled blossoms round my grave.

EDWARD ROWLAND SILL.

TO A NUTHATCH

Shrewd little haunter of woods all gray,
Whom I meet on my walk of a winter day,
You're busy inspecting each cranny and hole
In the ragged bark of yon hickory bole ;
You intent on your task, and I on the law
Of your wonderful head and gymnastic claw !



WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH

The woodpecker well may despair of this feat —
Only the fly with you can compete !
So much is clear ; but I fain would know
How you can so reckless and fearless go,
Head upward, head downward, all one to you,
Zenith and nadir the same to your view?

EDITH THOMAS.

The white of the snow is enchanting ;
Tell not of the ice-tree in words ;
There is joy in the bells of the snow-crunching sleigh,
In the ruddy cheek and the laughter gay,
But I long for the song of the birds.

The nimble titmouse is cheery,
The woodpecker's screech I have heard,
The little gray sparrows from over the sea
Chirp out a wee morsel of solace to me,
But not as the song of a bird.

Is Summer real and coming,
With its waving green and its herds ?
For the greatest good the Winter can bring
Is the hope in me of returning Spring,
And the joyous song of the birds.

Winter. — WILLIAM G. BARTON.

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Meadow-lark, page 80.

Alauda magna is the old name given by Linnæus. The modern scientific name is *Sturnella magna*.

Field-fares, page 186, stanza 3.

Here evidently not the true field-fare (a European thrush), but any small bird, like the sparrows, that lives in the fields.

Cliff Swallow, page 229, stanza 4.

Note here an apparent error—the American martin never rests under the eaves, though the English martin does. Probably the poet knew this perfectly, and merely used a poetic liberty, making “martin” synonymous with “swallow.”

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